

6/6/2020

Chief Resch:

All parts of the nation are reacting to at least two major ongoing crises. One is the COVID-19 pandemic that is ravaging our communities. Another is the ongoing victimization of black communities through inadequate policing practices that fail to administer quality protection.

The lack of any community involved process in the appointment of a new Assistant Chief does not champion representative leadership or transparency. We will not stand by idly with zero access to a process for a public leadership position in an institution that has failed to keep our people safe for generations.

We have relied on city leadership (the Mayor and City Council), along with the Portland Chief of Police and her leadership team, to provide what has long been promised: real transparency; increased employee development for rank and file officers; improved recruitment to represent a greater array of our community; focus on retention of quality officers; and not only the use of equity and diversity as words but also the input of equity experts in designing processes.

Even in the past few days, we have seen public statements from our Mayor, Police Chief, and elected leaders, indicating that they understand these crises, the value of the Black people and community, and how our own systems continue to victimize us for innocuous reasons. Yet things remain the same.

Hopeful of forward movement, our community is at a standstill while our city Police Bureau monotonously moves its monotone rank and file into leadership, lacking transparency and diversity at its highest decision making levels. To be more direct, we've seen Assistant Chief Lee's exit and the intentional appointment of his successor can only be painted as a blatant 'whitewashing' attempt in the Bureau's upper ranks. Or, perhaps, there were no qualified staff of color to promote? Both point to the obvious, the lack of long-term, inclusive planning and the inability of the Bureau to empower internal employees towards upward mobility and inclusive opportunities. Fruit of a tree we have consistently fed, watered, and sheltered from storms which neither feeds, nor waters, nor shelters us with any consistency.

The fact that we can identify three captains that seemed to have been eliminated from immediate contention highlights Portland's habitual behavior—its inability and failure to recognize qualified diverse talent, and provide them the equal interim opportunities as we often do for white officers.

This system, with its multiple-layered processes to ensure the utmost transparency, opportunities, and inclusiveness that has been promised, reeks of internal nepotism that perpetuates itself. It is exclusive of community oversight, diverse staff, and at best marginalizes the contribution of equity professionals.

This is a direct example of the lack of understanding in how to build trust and a direct affront to the legitimacy in process, ironically, the kind of example that initiated and drives the current protests.

Good leadership does not look for rational excuses or subvert process derived from best practices to legitimize itself. Leadership owns up to process mistakes and commits itself to compassion, empathy, sound reasoning, and logic, even when little is at stake. The lack of execution due to this internal action (and similar actions) produces concrete examples of how the lack of fundamental process flow is missing and underscores the reasons why the community distrusts the bureau.

As a result of this, we should immediately agree that a redress is necessary. We need to have a very public conversation and remedy to, not only this action, but also the systemic intentional decision making that helps perpetuate a White supremacist culture that puts our most vulnerable in its crosshairs.

Words from the Mayor, Police Chief, City Council, or any elected leader rings hollow, especially when they are simultaneously stated while clearly hiding intentional decisions that are counter to transparency, diversity and sound decision making which are values we have all adopted as a city.

The right process moving forward is to make the recent Assistant Chief appointment an interim position and publicly post a long-term Assistant Chief position to internal and external candidates. Without this intervention, the Mayor and City's commitment to representative leadership rings loud, hollow, and tone deaf; the reflection of an all-white leadership team in the Chief's Office of the Portland Police Bureau in 2020.

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