Flawed culture, not poor training

Mentality that led to death of George Floyd is a character issue.

By Louis M. Delmar

Recently, I received an email from a member of our community regarding the video recording of the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis. The citizen was very distressed by the involved official's response to the matter, questioning if the LaGrange Police Department had specific training to avoid this type of incident. He seemed to understand and be assured that LPO officers are better trained and care more than what this video represents of the Minneapolis Police Department and “other places that officer conduct is called into question.”

I responded to his email, but because of the number of comments and concerns have received from people in our city, I feel it necessary to publicly address this reprehensible use of force in a manner that is as relevant and as real as possible. The death of George Floyd is not a police training issue; it is the result of a troubled culture. I can honestly and categorically assure our citizens that the culture of the LaGrange Police Department is one of community partnerships, collaboration and respect for human life. There are certain instances of use of force are rare and consistent with best practices, department policy and training.

What is critically important in any police use of force incident is accountability. At the LaGrange Police Department, there is an applied system of checks and balances. These independent reviews include the LaGrange Police Chief, departmental commanders, professional standards director, independent auxiliary, and me. A part of this process is the viewing of body camera recordings of all officers involved in a use of force incident. George Floyd had body cameras for a decade, and was one of the first in the nation to require all officers to wear them and record every公民 encounter. In addition, all officers are trained annually and must take a written test on the use of force policy. This, throughout the year during shift roll calls, use of force policy review and tactical training events. We train our officers to conduct intervention as a part of our use of force curriculum and each officer also receives four hours of Crisis Intervention training. If an officer becomes involved in an incident, they are required to intervene and stop the inappropriate use of force and immediately report it. All of this unbalanced culture. However, the death of Mr. Floyd is not related to training. The bystanders that called out for the police to stop were not trained in police use of force but recognized what the police ignored, a fellow human being in pain, emaciatedly and unnecessarily being finally subdued. The action of the officer or officers on Mr. Floyd’s neck, the failure to intervene by the three other officers present at the scene and the press release of the incident which greatly mischaracterized the nature of George Floyd’s death, reflect a lack of core values that should be a concern to any police leader. Particularly in light of the fatal police shooting of justin Tkacz, an unarmed woman who had called 911 for help, and the subsequent trial and conviction of his police officer several years ago when there was no video or audio of the shooting and the officer who fired the fatal shot refused to answer investigators’ questions. He was convicted of murder in 2011. Incidents like these should be red flags to any agency that their policies and training are not in line with their critical incidents. I believe most officers with the Minneapolis Police Department are caring professionals, but clearly there are some who are not.

The key to our culture at the LaGrange Police Department is our understanding that we must individuate individuals who have a commitment to service and who care about people. I cannot train officers to care. That commitment is personal and cannot be provided by the background investigation stage. It is why only officers with a history of being highly recommended by their previous department are deployed. Our LaGrange Police officers successfully complete the selection and training process. It is why we have citizen reviews of our hiring board, so they can evaluate applicants and help ensure the officers we hire will provide the level of service our community deserves.

Like anyone viewing the video we are all shocked and appalled by what we see. It was totally unacceptable behavior by police. I also know it’s not reflective of the police officers I know and work with on a daily basis nor is it reflective of the agencies that are led by my colleagues. I appreciate the important fact that our citizens are engaged and that our police leadership to ensure that what happened in Minneapolis could not happen here. To that end, I would like to review any of our citizens to attend our police citizens academy, which provides an opportunity for an in-depth review of the daily job of a police officer. We look forward to having the various components of our citizens’ police department to be trained and informed citizens who can ask questions and contribute to police accountability.

Louis M. Delmar is chief of police, LaGrange Police Department.

ICE detainee’s death a predictable result of policies

I want to express my thanks for Jeremy Renaud’s story, “ICE detainee’s death in South Georgia jail” (News, May 26), which sums up the situation of undocumented individuals held in these federal facilities. The private prison in Lumpkin, Georgia, and the medical treatment standards at facilities such as this one have made the outbreak of coronavirus inevitable.

Having had the opportunity with Mr. Renaud, an organization in close contact with asylum seekers who have been detained and with their family members, I can attest to the fact that requests for medical attention are frequently ignored. Even their close quarters, additional boredom are all but inevitable. A sensible solution would be to release detainees — the vast majority of whom are not criminals and of no threat to society — allowing them to protect themselves from coronavirus at home while waiting for the courts to resolve their cases.

DIANA ANNALUZ

Drumbeat of news scares people, hurts economy

I see in my morning Q&A there were 16 weekend highway fatalities involving motorcycle deaths. So why don’t we see daily headlines lamenting these deaths and calling for quarantines, all drivers? Get these people off the roads and save their lives. We have no problem with page after page every day with each and every driver, lately person dying of COVID. Why not the same concern about the daily slaughter on our highways?

Seriously, perhaps a daily drumbeat of headlines would raise the awareness of highway deaths. In fact, statistically, you are much more likely to die in a traffic crash than of COVID. This highway fatalities are killing our young and healthy. But of course this does not support your motive of scaring people out of their cars while depleting our economy and the lives and dreams of people who no longer have jobs. In the way, how many COVID deaths were there over the weekend in Georgia?

GENE MENDELS

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From the right:

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