



June 14, 2023

Dear Law Enforcement Leaders, City Managers, and Elected Officials,

On behalf of the Santa Rosa - Sonoma NAACP, the Committee for Law Enforcement Accountability Now (CLEAN), the North Bay Organizing Project, and countless community members, we are writing with a great deal of concern regarding the recent racist text messaging [scandal](#) involving officers of the Antioch (CA) and Pittsburg (CA) Police Departments. Additionally, one of the Antioch police officers [implicated](#) in the text scandal is now a Deputy Chief of Police with the Boise, Idaho police department.

This letter is a follow-up to the March 2021 Resolution passed by the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights and the June 2021 letter from CLEAN sent to you regarding this issue. (Both of which are attached).

If this abhorrent conduct by the members of the Antioch and Pittsburg Police Departments were an isolated incident, we would be content to allow due process for the accused to take its natural, legal course. Unfortunately, this incident is the most recent example of law enforcement personnel engaging in blatant, overt acts of racism that are indicative of many deeper, more troubling problems plaguing law enforcement locally and nationwide.

Locally, in the past several years there have been several [incidents](#) of officers engaging in and publishing racist content via [text](#) or video involving several members of the San Francisco Police Department, as well as the more recent incident wherein a BART police officer created a racist [video](#) that was published online.

We are concerned that such blatant racism is being embraced by members of your respective agencies, and we would like to know what steps you are taking to ensure that your personnel are at all times being objective and acting without bias or prejudice towards the community that they are sworn to serve.

Can you please provide us with the following information:

- All relevant policies, procedures, standards, and training that addresses the issue of employees engaging in hateful and/or biased behavior?
- What affirmative steps are you taking to monitor employee activity that calls into question their ability to provide fair and constitutional policing, both in their professional capacity and in their personal lives?
- Are there current internal investigations involving officers who are alleged to have engaged in race/gender/ethnic bias?

As stated, the incidents in Antioch, Pittsburg, San Francisco, Eureka, Torrence, and beyond are not isolated cases committed by a few "bad apples", but a problem that is much more far reaching that threatens all of us.

In a [report](#) published by the Brennan Center For Justice on August 27, 2020 titled “Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy, and Far-Right Militancy in Law Enforcement”, author Michael German states that “*Explicit racism in law enforcement takes many forms, from membership or affiliation with violent white supremacist or far-right militant groups, to engaging in racially discriminatory behavior toward the public or law enforcement colleagues, to making racist remarks and sharing them on social media. ...it is widely acknowledged that racist officers subsist within police departments around the country, (yet) federal, state, and local governments are doing far too little to proactively identify them...*”

The Brennan Center makes several recommendations to prevent people with these extreme views and behavior from becoming or remaining in law enforcement agencies. We urge you to adopt them, as follows, and report to us on your efforts to implement them:

- *Establish clear policies regarding participation in white supremacist organizations and other far-right militant groups, and on overt and explicit expressions of racism — with specificity regarding tattoos, patches, and insignia as well as social media postings. These policies should be properly vetted by legal counsel to ensure compliance with constitutional rights, state and local laws, and collective bargaining agreements, and they must be clearly explained to staff.*
- *Hire a diverse workforce to more accurately reflect the demographic makeup of the communities the agency serves, and promote them fairly through the ranks.*
- *Establish mitigation plans when biased police officers are detected. Mitigation plans could include referrals to internal affairs, local prosecutors, or the DOJ for investigation and prosecution; termination or other disciplinary action; limitations of assignments to reduce potentially problematic contact with the public; retraining; and intensified supervision and auditing.*
- *Establish reporting mechanisms to ensure evidence of overtly racist behavior by a police officer is provided to prosecutors and employ Brady lists or similar reporting mechanisms to ensure defendants receive notice.*
- *Encourage whistleblowing and protect whistleblowers.*

We also urge you to adopt the use of an attestation such as the one attached to this letter and recommended by the Community Advisory Council to IOLERO for use by the sheriff, to be signed by all employees annually.

The residents and workers of Sonoma County deserve to have full faith and confidence in the officers who are sworn to protect us. With the history of strained relationships between Sonoma County law enforcement and the community, it is imperative that we work collaboratively in achieving true bias free policing.

Sincerely,

Santa Rosa - Sonoma NAACP

Committee for Law Enforcement Accountability Now (CLEAN)

North Bay Organizing Project

EXHIBIT A

DRAFT ATTESTATION FOR SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF EMPLOYEES (to be administered annually on (1) beginning of calendar year, (2) beginning of fiscal year, or (3) on anniversary of date of hire)

I, (employee name), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that in the past year I:

- (a) Have continued to meet the standard for duty that requires me to be free from any bias against race or ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, disability, or sexual orientation which might adversely affect the exercise of police powers;[1]
- (b) Have not joined or been a member of any extremist group;[2]
- (c) Have not, unless required by law or policy, discriminated against, oppressed, or provided favoritism to any person because of actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, economic status, cultural group, veteran status, marital status, or any other classification or status protected by law;[3]
- (d) Have not intentionally denied or impeded another in the exercise or enjoyment of any right, privilege, power, or immunity, knowing the conduct is unlawful;[4]
- (e) Have not associated with or joined a criminal gang, organized crime, and/or criminal syndicate, knowing or with reason to have known, the criminal nature of the organization;[5]
- (f) Have not, on a personal basis, associated with any person who demonstrated recurring involvement in serious violations of state or federal laws, knowing or with reason to have known of such criminal activities, except as specifically directed and authorized by the SCSO.[6]

I (employee name) do further solemnly swear (affirm) that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties upon which I am about to enter.

[1] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §1000.7.1(g)
[2] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §1000.7(h)
[3] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §320.5.3
[4] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §320.5.3
[5] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §320.5.4
[6] SCSO Standards of Conduct (Rules & Regulations) §320.5.4