

Crowd Questions Citizens Police Review Board on Cops

Written by Paradise Gray ID3020
Wednesday, 20 September 2006 01:09 -

Citizens Police Review Board Hears about aggressive Cops in Pittsburgh by Paradise Gray

An emotional crowd came out to the Pittsburgh City County Building on Monday September 18/2006, the same night that "Big Ben" Roethlisberger made his 2006 debut for the Steelers. But they didn't come out to swing "Terrible Towels" on this Monday night. They came out to ask questions about why Pittsburgh Police officer Eric Tatusko waved his "Terrible Pistol" in the face of Pamela Lawton's youngest daughter 7-year old Joshalyn, terrorizing Mrs. Lawton her two daughters, and two other children aged 2 and 3 years old who were in her car on August 26th, 2006.

I greeted Minister Jasiri X of Pittsburgh's Muhammad's Mosque #22 outside of the City/County building. He introduced me to Mrs. Pamela Lawton, who seemed a little shy and intimidated that we had showed up with so many young people who were very enthusiastically greeting her with hugs and handshakes. We had made a bunch of phone calls and sent out emails making a passionate plea for people to come out and show their support for the women and children of our community. A diverse group heeded the call and representatives of One Hood, The Disciples of the Village, The BlackWatch Movement, The League of Young Voters, The Millions More Movement, The Black Political Empowerment Project, The Nation of Gods and Earths, The National Political Hip-Hop Convention, JPB Inc, IDI Productions, Brotha Ash Productions, The Soul Pitt, Al Nur, Royal Tribe Music, The Community Empowerment Association, Urban Youth Action, The Mental Health Association of Allegheny County and other concerned community members met in front of the City/County Building for a meeting organized by the Citizen Police Review Board.

I suggested that we jay-walk and cross the street directly to the City/County building from the parking lot, Mrs. Lawton said that we should obey the law and wait for the light and cross at the corner. After we crossed the street she pulled Brother Jasiri to the side and told him that she was uncomfortable being in the center of so much attention and controversy because her only intention was to save her daughters life. Minister Jasiri reassured her that all of the people were only there to offer her support, and show everyone that there were black men in Pittsburgh who cared about our women and children. She thanked Brother Jasiri and we proceeded to go upstairs to the City County Chamber room.

Mrs. Lawton's supporters stood as she approached the podium and silence crept across the room as she spoke before the review board about the terror of being pulled over and having her life and the lives of her children threatened at the intersection of Negley and Kentucky Avenue

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in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh on August 26th by Officer Eric Tatusko. She became emotional as she described how Officer Tatusko approached the passenger side of her car and drew his pistol and pointed it directly at her 7 year old daughter Joshalyn and told her to get her hands up. Scared by the gun pointing at them while the officer ignored the pleas of their mother, the young girls screamed and cried causing Officer Tatusko to tell Mrs. Lawton that if she didn't tell the kids to stop moving around and screaming he would "Blow her brains out"! Mrs. Lawton explained that she literally begged the officer to come over to the drivers window and deal with her as she was the only adult in the car, but he was focused and continued to point the gun at her daughter and ignored her pleas to put down the gun and take her identification. Mrs. Lawton then began to scream for help with her hands in the air. There are witnesses who heard Mrs. Lawton's agonized screams for help and saw the officer with his gun drawn pointed at the passenger side of the car. Officer Tatusko held his gun on Mrs. lawton and her children for over 20 to 30 minutes and Mrs. Lawton said that she was so relieved when other officers arrived at the scene that she attempted to hug the first one that came close enough, who pushed her away. To make matters worst Lt. Cindy Windsor a female officer separated Mrs. Lawton from her children and told her to "shut up or you're going to jail and your children to CYF". Mrs. Lawton had committed no crime, had no drugs or weapons in the car and neither she nor her children did anything to provoke the Officer to pull his gun.

Mrs. Lawton was not the only person to tell a nightmare story involving misconduct by the Pittsburgh Police, many people black and white told stories of being disrespected, yelled at and in a few cases beaten by Pittsburgh Police officers one lady told of how her 13 year old daughter was beaten up by police and Ms. Tamecia Anderson told a sad story of being handcuffed, arrested, stripped, beaten and shocked with a taser in a holding cell (while 4 months pregnant) by "Zone 5" Pittsburgh Police Officers and Correction Officers at The Allegany County Jail in 2003. When she awakened from being knocked unconscious and held for 3 days, she went to the hospital and was told that she needed emergency surgery because the baby in her stomach was dead. When asked why it took so long to come forward with this information Ms. Anderson responded "I was young and I didn't know who to call or where to go to report the Police. When you get beat up by someone, you call the Police, who do you call when the Police are the ones that hurt you?" I didn't find out about this Police Review Board until today.

I am OUTRAGED! at the actions of the Pittsburgh Police department, I understand that they have one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs in the world, but that does not excuse the kind of behaviour that the people spoke of in front of the review board. I am equally outraged at the people who did not come out and support. Some people really had some good excuses, classes, practices, prior engagements, soooo whattt! Would these excuses be worth the words if this was your daughter? Your family? There are no excuses good enough to explain why any man who heard about this meeting and did not show up should not have come. We have been talking the talk forever. It is time to walk the walk.

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Freedom is NOT FREE! My Elder Sonny Carson once told me: "Never ask for anything that you can't take". You cannot ask for Freedom! We are responsible for our women and our children and everything else that happens in our community. Drugs in our community - We are responsible, violence in our community - We are responsible. When are we going to stand up like men and handle our business? We have stood on the backs of our mothers and our women for too long, It is time for Blackmen to stand up on our own two feet. Our women must be tired of holding us up. We defend our money with our life, we defend our jewelry, our drugs, our block, when are we going to defend our women and children? We have to clean up ourselves and our community and put the neighbor back in the "Hood". It is the only way that we will be able to fix our family situations and our relationships with our women. What could possibly be more important than that?

Paradise Gray

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