



LaToya Cantrell
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

*715 South Broad Street
New Orleans, LA 70119*

"to protect and to serve"

December 21, 2020



Shaun D. Ferguson
SUPERINTENDENT

To our Community,

The New Orleans Police Department deeply respects the Community's concern and feedback, resulting from the unfortunate activities on the Ponchartrain Expressway on the night of June third of this year. That night our Officers engaged protesters attempting to cross the Crescent City Connection. What started as a peaceful demonstration quickly escalated into civil unrest prompted by a few instigators encouraging the crowd to cross the bridge. In response to some protesters' acts of violence, our officers deployed tear gas, foam impact rounds, and stinger rubber balls to address those disrupting protesters. Unfortunately, impacts were suffered by several peaceful protesters and several of our officers. Following that night's activities, our Public Integrity Bureau (PIB) Force Investigation Team (FIT) immediately launched an investigation. FIT worked with oversight and input from the Independent Police Monitor's Office (IPMO) and our Consent Decree Monitors as well as the following organizations.

- Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition
- The Vera Institute of Justice
- Courtwatch Nola
- The MacArthur Institute
- The Public Defender's Office
- The Promise of Justice Initiative
- The Innocence Project New Orleans
- Voice of The Experienced
- The ACLU
- Community Recallers

The NOPD sought out and encouraged feedback to ensure a fair, objective, and thorough investigation.

The investigation findings are as troubling as they are disappointing. Even while working with our partners in the Consent Decree – the NOPD did not have an adequate "Use of Force Policy" to govern the use and reporting of specialized weapons, such as "Tear Gas" and "Impact rounds."

The NOPD did not have the policy to respond to this protest, which resulted in Department failures on the bridge that night. There was a lack of planning and tactical decision making, which resulted in an unprecedented incident that has never happened in the City of New Orleans.

To correct these deficiencies, the NOPD is taking steps to make sure any future NOPD engagements with protesters never mimic the activities that took place June third. NOPD has implemented a new policy governing our response to protests. This policy makes the safety of everyone involved and not involved in

"an equal opportunity employer"

incidents of civil unrest our number one priority. It calls for open and transparent communication and ensures specialized weapons, such as tear gas, will only be used as a last resort where life is in danger. We have drafted a revised "Use of Force Policy" that addresses all of the specialized weapons used by the department, especially those only authorized for use by specific units, such as SWAT. The NOPD has now established a permanent group of officers who have undergone new training and are dedicated to responding to civil unrest protests and events. The NOPD continues to implement training involving de-escalation and communication, especially communicating in crowds.

The NOPD has and always will support peaceful protest. We stand in unity with our community members who peacefully exercise their First Amendment Rights. We remind our officers and the Community not to take the bait from people determined to instigate violence during peaceful protests. The messages in these protests are essential – police reform and improving our criminal justice system are necessary conversations. Unfortunately, when violence occurs, the message is lost. The New Orleans Police Department strives to be at the forefront of modern policing and criminal justice reform, we will continue to be a model for reform and a beacon for Constitutional Policing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Ferguson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shaun D. Ferguson,
Superintendent of Police