

OPINION “Jon Mitchell stop duck and dodge accountability to New Bedford citizens”

“It is quite ironic that on Thursday, September 24th “mayor” Jon Mitchell rejected an invitation to participate in a community dialogue with the NAACP and United Interfaith Action regarding police violence and accountability, and then Jon made a claim in the press that he selected members for the Mayor’s Commission on Police Use of Force with the counsel of the NAACP on Friday September 25th!?!?!?”

Jon you claim the NAACP counseled your choices as cover for the lack of diversity and inclusion in your Commission on Police Use of Force. Yet Thursday you choose not to include yourself in the NAACP and United Interfaith Action organized community discussion about the police force in our city! Jon please explain just how exactly does that work?

It was appalling to learn from Jeffrey Cardoza, Fall River’s chief of police, that Mitchell went further and invested time lobbying Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan in order to convince him to also reject participation in this community meeting with the NAACP and United Interfaith Action.

It appears Jon Mitchell was afraid participation of Fall River’s mayor would highlight Mitchell’s cowardice ducking and dodging of accountability to the citizens of New Bedford he is handsomely paid to serve. More troubling is the fact that it also appears Mitchell ordered the New Bedford Police Chief Cordero to abandon his already confirmed commitment to attend. This is shameful and spineless public leadership.

For the record, Jon your Commission on Police Use of Force does not represent the same demographics as New Bedford (age, gender, race, ethnicity, language proficiency, class, and

neighborhood). Your Commission is stacked with many members who do not even reside in the city of New Bedford. Many of the members are either police officers, former police officers, prosecutors, former prosecutors, or people who are or have been coupled with police, prosecuting attorneys, or the criminal "justice" system. Moreover, the majority of the commission is over 50 years old, middle or upper middle class, english speaking, college educated, and/or connected to the police union or your administration.

As such the makeup of Mitchell's commission has a limited range of experiences and ideas by design. It certainly does not reflect the diversity of our city. This failure emphasizes the need for an independent and fully funded oversight board with subpoena power. The oversight board must be independent, not only from the police department, but also from elected politics, and have a fixed budget, so that it is able to effectively and independently investigate complaints. The board's structure needs to be designed by the community, not the Mayor. This ensures true community voice and perspective centered around the needs of those most impacted by police violence, abuse, and misconduct.

Jon Mitchell if you should discover a spine or an ounce of integrity then perhaps you will register for Sunday's October 4th 2pm final presentation of "The Malcolm Gracia Story: A Presentation of Evidence" covering the shooting death of Malcolm and the botched investigation by registering via emailing MalcolmGraciaEvidence@Gmail.com.

In light of the fact that Mitchell has skipped out on four weeks of presentations of evidence here is a link to David Ehren's "Years after Malcolm Gracia's murder, questions remain" The article summarizes September 20th presentation covering "the altercation" between Detective Tyson Barnes and Malcolm Gracia. We can only hope Mitchell will finally stop avoiding the truth and make a commitment to attend the final presentation on Sunday October 4th. If he truly believes in

justice he will and will review the evidence.

If he does perhaps he will understand and agree to the following demands from our community:

- The immediate firing of New Bedford Police officers Tyson Barnes, David Brown, Paul Fonseca, Brian Safioleas, and Trevor Sylvia for their involvement in the murder of Malcolm Gracia.
- That Detectives David Brown, Tyson Barnes, Paul Fonseca, Trevor Sylvia and Sgt. Brian Safioleas be charged for filing false police reports based on their affidavits filed on October 22, 2018 in the case of Christina Gracia v. City of New Bedford et al. Docket No. 1573CV00467.
- That Detectives David Brown and Tyson Barnes be charged for violating Malcolm Gracia and Adam Carreira's civil rights.
- That Detective Trevor Sylvia be charged with Second Degree Murder based on the evidence in the case, which shows that Detective Sylvia shot Malcolm three times in the back as he was running away from officers.
- That Detective Paul Fonseca be charged with First Degree Murder based on the evidence in the case, which includes Fonseca's statements to Massachusetts State Police.
- Creation of an independent and fully funded civilian oversight board with subpoena power led by those most impacted by structural racism and state sanctioned violence.
- A thorough and independent investigation into NBPD's use of surveillance technology, including its costs relative to its efficacy, the violation of civil liberties, and most importantly, its disparate impact on communities oppressed by structural racism, class domination, and xenophobia.

#JusticeForMalcolmGracia." -Erik Andrade.

Erik Andrade

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