

December 2, 2020

Interim Chief Adrian Diaz
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Diaz:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

Case Number

- 2020OPA-0369 / 2020COMP-0014

Topic

- Racial Equity

Summary

- It was alleged that the named employee (NE) called an African American coworker a “thug” and that the use of the term was derogatory and constituted a racial slur.

Analysis

- The complainant officer, who is Black, walked into the precinct locker room wearing an Under Armour sweatshirt with the hood up, sweatpants, Crocks shoes, headphones, and a Department-issued face mask. The NE remarked that the complainant looked like a “thug.” After changing into his uniform, the complainant told the NE he felt disrespected.
- The complainant told his sergeant that calling an African American man a thug is offensive and constitutes a racial slur. He said that judging a person of color solely by what they are wearing is problematic and, if the NE did so with other officers, it was possible that he also did so with community members.
- The sergeant, who is also Black, informed the NE that his comments were offensive and could be construed as racist. The NE ultimately apologized to the complainant officer.
- The sergeant told OPA he felt the NE did not understand the implications of his words, but that he did not intend to make a racist statement. Four of the five witness officers interviewed by OPA also felt that the NE made a poor choice in words but did not intend to be derogatory.
- A fifth witness officer, who was not present during the incident but became aware sometime after, stated that there have been several occasions where he has notified his chain of command of racial issues. He expressed deep frustration with the Department, and specifically, with the North Precinct, for their lack of follow up on these concerns.
- OPA deems the allegation of bias against the NE to be inconclusive and instead issues this Management Action Recommendation.

Recommendation(s)

- Advise all SPD employees that use of the term “thug” to refer to an individual of color constitutes an impermissible racial slur for which there will be zero tolerance moving forward.
- Require that all North Precinct employees receive racial equity training that specifically touches on the use of comments such as “thug” and the impact this can have on people of color, including officers of color.



Seattle Office of Police Accountability

- Consider revising and expanding SPD's biased policing training to amplify the experiences of BIPOC communities, including officers of color, in order to build increased understanding and racial awareness among officers.
- Open an EEO investigation to evaluate specific concerns from the complainant and the fifth witness officer to determine what concerns were relayed to the North Precinct chain of command, and to identify what actions, if any, the chain of command took in response. If it is determined that no action was taken, EEO should determine why, as well as whether the lack of follow-up constitutes a policy violation. At the conclusion of its investigation, EEO should consult with SPD Human Resources, OPA, and the Office of Inspector General to determine whether an expansion of the investigation is warranted.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

AM

Andrew Myerberg
Director, Office of Police Accountability