

NOPD: NEW ORLEANS POLICE IN DISARRAY

Contributed by Jeff Couere
Friday, 11 July 2008

There is something rotten in the New Orleans Police Department. While there are scores of courageous and committed officers who risk their lives every day, there is a serious problem in that department, which stems from the poor leadership of Police Chief Warren Riley.

Just look at the recent incidents involving two police officers. One case involved a 35-year veteran, Sgt. Bob Guidry, who wore a powder blue shirt on his final day as a sign of respect for fallen comrades. He was suspended 15 minutes before the end of his career, resulting in the loss of his commission and his ability to serve as a reserve officer. It also was a negative mark on his sterling record, harming his chances to be employed in the future.

Guidry's wardrobe decision was not meant to show disrespect toward anyone, but only to honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. After 35 years of loyal service, Guidry should have been allowed to wear whatever he wanted on his final day on the force. So, a man who spends decades wearing the NOPD uniform, defending the citizens and putting his life on the line receives a suspension for wearing the wrong color shirt. It is an outrage!

Incredibly, according to Eric Hessler, the attorney for Sgt. Guidry, the 35 year veteran "never received a call from anyone at the department thanking him for his service." How sad that someone who gave so much to the department and his city was not thanked, but instead was suspended for wearing a power blue shirt.

While Guidry was treated harshly, Donyell Sanchell was given a light punishment for his unprofessional and dangerous behavior the other day on the Crescent City Connection. Sanchell, a four year NOPD veteran, drove like a maniac across the span, bumped a bridge officer with his vehicle and then slapped the officer at the police station. So, Guidry and Sanchell were both suspended for their "offenses." In reality, these incidents were very different and should have been handled much differently. There are serious troubles at the NOPD that need to be addressed and these management issues are preventing the department from dealing with the number one crisis facing the city, a horrendous crime problem.

Ever since Katrina, crime has been out of control. New Orleans has the unenviable distinction of being the murder capital of the nation. The carnage continues unabated, for example, on Thursday, two people were killed in New Orleans East. It is clear that priorities are misplaced at the NOPD. Instead of worrying about police attire, Chief Riley should be much more concerned about the murder rate.

It is past time for new leadership at the NOPD. Chief Riley has proven himself to be incompetent leader of the force, but, he is supported by another incompetent leader, Mayor Ray Nagin, who appoints the Police Chief. New Orleans will not see improvement in the NOPD until the city gets a new leader at City Hall. It will not come until the next election in two years. Until then New Orleans has to endure a horrific crime rate and poor leadership. Problems will only intensify when the National Guard leaves the city and the NOPD has to deal with the crime situation on its own.

Several weeks ago, Mayor Nagin offered his solution for the homeless problem; give the street dwellers a one way bus ticket out of town. I have a better idea; let's give both Warren Riley and Ray Nagin a one way ticket out of town on a bus driven by Donyell Sanchell. For this ride, he can drive 90 mph if he wants, the faster they leave town, the better.