



The post called for the recruitment of 57 officers who resigned from the Buffalo Police Department's Emergency Response Team (which responds to riots and other crowd control situations) in support of two ERT officers who were suspended without pay. The two suspended officers of the team are seen on a video pushing a 75-year-old man to the ground, where he lay bleeding from a head wound. The incident was captured on multiple videos and stirred up widespread criticism. The Buffalo officers who shoved the elderly man have been arrested on criminal charges arising from the incident. Additionally, the Brevard County FOP's post called for the hiring of the 6 Atlanta police officers who are facing criminal charges stemming from an incident in which they pulled two young people from a car, then proceeded to shoot them with stun guns. This incident was also captured on video, which occurred during protests over the death of George Floyd. Brevard County F.O.P. President Bert Gamin claimed responsibility for the recruitment post. Mr. Gamin is a lieutenant, who has served the Brevard County's Sheriff's Office for the last 26 years. He is not a rookie. He is not "green." When confronted with the outrageousness of his statement on behalf of the FOP, he doubled down and defended his post and the behavior of the Buffalo 57 and Atlanta 6 to Florida Today, despite significant public outcry. Mr. Gamin has since deleted the original post and issued a public apology. The apology itself has also been deleted and replaced with an image of a thin blue line, which suggests his apology was severely lacking in actual remorse.

Brevard FACDL applauds the law enforcement agencies and representatives that have already publicly condemned the recent sentiments by the Brevard County FOP. While Sheriff Wayne Ivey did publicly distance both himself and the Sheriff's Office from the post authored by Mr. Gamin, it is not enough. Sheriff Ivey should launch an internal affairs investigation into Mr. Gamin and his actions, and when it is ultimately determined he violated rules of conduct, Sheriff Ivey should fire Mr. Gamin. Statements such as Gamin's are harmful to efforts to rebuild the reputation of law enforcement and re-establish trust in the community.

On Saturday, June 6, 2020, several local police chiefs attended the March for Justice town hall in Cocoa, Florida. Those who attended felt heard, and the chiefs who were present have already begun or promised reforms.

However, there was one conspicuous absence from the March for Justice town hall: Sheriff Ivey. Sheriff Ivey must implement the reforms detailed in the link at the end of this release to improve transparency, accountability, and diversity. Many of the chiefs who did attend the townhall have recognized the vital importance of these reforms and have already implemented or promised to implement them. We applaud their decisions to do so. Sheriff Ivey must take similar actions to protect all Brevard citizens.

Recently, BCSO arrested Caprellia Stewart, a black woman previously brutalized by Cocoa police, for a Facebook post that appeared to promote the burning of police vehicles (Brevard County Case No. 05-2020-CF-029161-A). According to the arrest affidavit, her post was reported to Agent Christopher Castiello with the Brevard County Sheriff's Office by the Cocoa Police Department, the same department that was required to pay her a settlement following their mistreatment. Antwan Hart Yates was also arrested for similar posts (Brevard County case no. 05-2020-CF-029560-A). Mr. Yates is also black. As members of the community we are aware that several white people have made specific threats to shoot and otherwise harm Brevard citizens, yet they have not been arrested. As the local FACDL chapter, we will not hesitate to fight, and draw attention to, investigations and arrest decisions, or the lack thereof, that appear to be made on the basis of race, religion, or association.

These latest incidents are perfect examples of why Brevard County must immediately institute a citizen oversight system for law enforcement. Mr. Gamin's despicable statements and the other actions of law enforcement described herein have severely damaged the public trust in law enforcement and implicate significant concerns about the kind of policing the citizens of Brevard County want in our community. To build and strengthen public confidence in law enforcement, there must be transparency and community involvement in policing the police. Citizen oversight boards have been instituted in many jurisdictions as far back as the 1950's. We call upon law enforcement and our community leaders to institute this long overdue policy to improve community relations and demonstrate their firm commitment to police accountability without delay. Now is a time for action, not mere words.

History has demonstrated that police unions can be formidable opponents on the road to change. They are in place to zealously protect members accused of misconduct, often behind closed doors. Again, history has demonstrated that unions have successfully blocked overall change in and around the criminal justice system, sometimes using their position to destroy efforts to increase law enforcement accountability. By calling for the hiring of the Buffalo 57 and Atlanta 6, the Brevard County FOP has publicly declared that their support for their fellow officers will not change, no matter how appalling and criminal the behavior may be. Police officers must be accountable to the communities and to the people they serve. They must also value civil rights and demonstrate respect for all people.

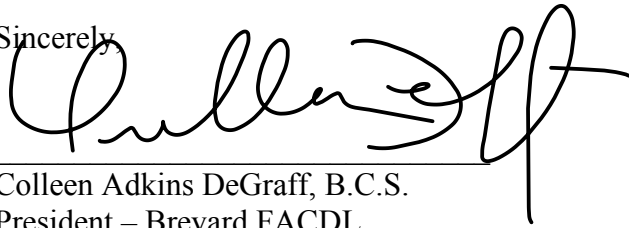
Brevard FACDL condemns Brevard County FOP's disgusting, distasteful, and downright terrifying post. Brevard FACDL urges all local law enforcement agencies to publicly denounce the behavior of the FOP, and further urges individual law enforcement officers to cut ties with the FOP. We also urge the Police Benevolent Association to denounce the statements made by the Brevard County FOP. We call upon our local county commissioners to publicly denounce this behavior and join us in calling for investigations, citizen oversight, and transparency within the

Sheriff's Office and all law enforcement agencies in Brevard County. We also ask for Agriculture Commissioner Nicole "Nikki" Fried to formally request that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement review Mr. Gamin's conduct and consider rescinding his certification.

The residents of Brevard County do not want their towns and cities policed by men and women who protect, glorify, and recruit officers who brutalize fellow citizens. The people of Brevard entrust law enforcement with an awesome power, and the stakes could not be higher when that power is abused – they are, quite literally, life and liberty. Attorneys who practice in this county are tasked with the great responsibility of defending the rights of all its citizens and safeguarding the system of checks and balances within the criminal justice system. We will do our part to ensure that this type of unacceptable behavior by law enforcement is watched, highly scrutinized, and defended against by all reasonable, constitutional, and legal means possible. Overall criminal justice reform is required to ensure the safety and security of all citizens.

A comprehensive list of urgent and necessary criminal justice reforms can be found at:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/dec8ftd0lw8jhms/BREVARD%20FACDL%20REFORM%20FLYER.pdf?dl=0>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colleen DeGraff", written over a horizontal line.

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