



Tulane Law Clinic
Civil Rights and Federal Practice Clinic
Criminal Clinic
Domestic Violence Clinic
Juvenile Clinic
First Amendment Clinic

June 7, 2020

New Orleans Police
Department Public Integrity Bureau
Attn. Chief Arlinda Westbrook
Via email to apwestbrook@nola.gov

Office of the Independent Police Monitor
Attn. Susan Hutson
Via email to shutson@nolaipm.gov

Federal Court-Appointed Monitor of the NOPD Consent Decree
Attn. Mr. Jonathan Aronie
Via email to: monitoringteam@consentdecreemonitor.com
jaronie@sheppardmullin.com

Dear Chief Westbrook, Monitor Hutson and Mr. Aronie,

I am writing to respond to the NOPD statements that only tear gas was used upon the protesters on the Crescent City Connection on June 3, 2020. The Department and the Chief directly have now made these statements at least four times publicly. In press conferences and in written statements the Department stated explicitly, “no rubber bullets were fired,” and “only gas, only gas” was used. This is false. Ranking staff within the Department know these statements are false. They have failed to tell the public—and you-- the truth.

I have a rubber bullet that hit someone on Wednesday night. I also have received many photos of injuries of men and women who were on the bridge, and photographs of other projectiles that do not match the bullet in my possession. I am attaching that material here. It seems that multiple types of projectiles were fired, and I am deeply concerned that the material in my possession is only the tip of the iceberg. I want to add my voice to the voices of others who have been calling on the NOPD for days to be honest about what happened.

It defies explanation that the highest levels of our Department would mislead the public about what weapons were used by our police force. Perhaps more discouraging is the NOPD public

reaction to questions by the public, which was to flatly deny the truth, for days. Please review the attached materials. It is indisputable that NOPD officers unleashed serious and potentially deadly force onto peaceful people seeking to exercise their First Amendment rights.

People sought to cross a bridge that is a glaring reminder of racial injustice in our community. The Crescent City Connection is a marker for many New Orleanians of the attempted evacuation post-Katrina that was met with fire by the Gretna police. It also is a marker of our unity with our neighbors in Jefferson Parish in the recent death of Modesto Reyes. Many in our community dispute the idea that force was justified at all on the bridge. The chief's comment to the press that tear gas was used only against individuals who were trying to cross the police line is demonstrably wrong. Tear gas is not a weapon that is capable of being targeted to individuals that are in the midst of a large crowd. Rather, that weapon was deployed against large numbers of people who were peacefully protesting, who were not involved in trying to cross the police line and was fired into a crowd that included young children. Many question why the protesters were not simply allowed to peaceably cross the bridge, and then return, as they were peaceably requesting to do. Our community will need answers to all of these questions ultimately.

A basic first start would be for the NOPD to immediately tell the truth about what weapons were used against people on the bridge that night, tell us who made that decision, and why. A secondary question is why the highest-ranking officer in the Department represented otherwise to the public. I ask you all to help us get answers to these questions, immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

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cc: New Orleans City Council, via e-mail to: jarwilliams@nola.gov;
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Encl.





Reply...











