

Letter to the Editor: Incident reports from the streets of Gallup

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 05 August 2016 07:20

Editor,

RE: "Armed and Dangerous", The Gallup Sun, July 29, 2016.

The killing of Alvin Ross Sylversmyth on July 24 was going to happen eventually; if not him, another Navajo would be dead. Former Gallup Police Department Chief Robert Cron, Deputy Chief John Allen, and Captain Rick White were personally presented with testimony regarding the brutality of the GPD, especially the "Protective Custody" officers that roam the streets 24/7 picking whoever they can nab.

I have been accosted many times by the GPD while walking on the streets minding my own business and sober; this compelled me to compile a document "Incident Reports from the Streets of Gallup" over a two-year period and submit it (in January 2016) to the full Navajo Nation Council, the Office of the President and Vice-President, the regional New Mexico State Legislative Representatives, and Governor Susan Martinez. The mayor of Gallup, Jackie McKinney, refused to talk with me and refused to accept the document. Not one elected individual in the position to do something about this violence, has done anything about it.

I informed the aforementioned "leadership" of all the violence produced by the GPD—especially the P.C. officers—and that if it is not dealt with, a GPD officer will probably end up killing a Navajo man or woman. I knew this would happen based on the treatment that I personally have received from the hands of the GPD. They did not do anything and Gallup's finest recently retired with undeserved accolades and false praise; I had to sue to obtain justice (and a court settlement).

What kind of "law enforcement" training does the city of Gallup allow when it "plays a vital role in assisting the Gallup Police Department through joint crime, drug and violence prevention efforts" that now includes the killing of Navajos? This is exemplified when you tally the number of alcohol-related exposure deaths when Gallup allows the number of liquor licenses far over what New Mexico says is "legal." No doubt the six officers will be exonerated and keep their jobs in spite of the blood on their hands.

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Gallup now joins the nation-wide ranks of cops killing civilians; dead men tell no tales and alcohol is the life blood of “Drunk Town, U.S.A.” The result is a depraved indifference to life and a clear and present danger to everyone, especially Navajos.

The question remains: When is the Navajo Nation leadership going to take a stand and actually take the helm of leadership when the majority of cases involving the deaths of our people include alcohol?

Alvin “Big Al” Sylversmythe, Loreal Tsingine, Larry Casuse and countless others who have been taken before their time by police officers should appeal to our conscience. Expect more racial profiling, discrimination, continued 24/7 P.C. manhunts of Navajos along with “off the chart” rates of DWI, sexual assault, property damage, and other public health harms if you do not hold the GPD accountable for this unwarranted killing of a Navajo citizen when the six officers could have taken Sylversmythe down with non-lethal means.

The only ones “armed and dangerous” are the Gallup Police Department officers who now shoot to kill when it comes to Navajos.

Join the call for Justice and a U.S. Department of Justice Investigation for Navajo men and women that are being killed by police officers in border towns that surround the Navajo Nation on Saturday, August 06, 2016 from noon to 5 pm at the Gallup Cultural Center located at 201 East Highway 66. Bring your signs, banners, cedar, and prayers.

Mervyn Tilden, Gallup