

Brooks - Vallejo Calif police assault eleven-year-old boy - 5/14/14

Ethicalego Speaks

Ethicalego (Kenneth Brooks) discusses current events from a critical thinking perspective rarely expressed elsewhere

Vallejo Calif police assault eleven-year-old boy

By Kenneth Brooks

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Vallejo Calif. police assaulted a boy of eleven then dropped him at school. Police spokespersons deny the mother's charge her son was the victim of police racial profiling. However, the news report of police conduct, not disputed by them, supports this conclusion.

Usually, I support police actions during crime emergencies especially when my only information is a news report. However, neither side disputes the facts of this incident. Police conduct during and after this incident is troubling. It victimized a child innocent of any misconduct. It shows an attitude by police officers and their superiors oblivious to the racial bias that may have influenced their decisions that day. If not racial profiling, police rationalization of their conduct reveals their opinion of Vallejo residents mainly as a criminal threat and only secondarily as a citizenry, they serve and protect.

Ktvu.com reports, "Vallejo Police Lt. Kevin Bartlett explained the 11-year-old was at the wrong place at the wrong time. He said police received a call from the homeowner saying shots had been fired and that a woman in a hoodie was waving a gun."

True, the child was at the right place at the wrong time of a reported crime in the area. Nevertheless, the concern of responding police officers should have been to remove him from danger. After all, they had the duty besides identifying

and arresting the perpetrator to protect the safety of innocent people at the scene of a crime. Instead, they surrounded Mims with guns drawn, ordered him to put his hands in the air, get on the ground, and threatened to shoot him if he moved.

Romie Mims was a boy in the sixth grade whose gender did not match the female suspect described in the police call. Clearly, he was not waving a gun. Therefore, what about Mims' appearance prompted police to treat him as a criminal and not as an innocent party? Even if they mistook him for a female, they had the same duty to treat a woman on the scene as an innocent bystander unless her actions or evidence suggested a different role. Instead, their hasty actions placed this child at unnecessary risk. This discussion would be about police shooting an unarmed child if Mims' body had reacted involuntarily with jerky spasms of fear instead of with tears.

Police dismissive attitude of Mims' basic rights of human dignity continued after they decided he was not their suspect. After assaulting Mims emotionally and physically, one of them patronizingly placed him in a police car and drove him to school. Anybody, adult or child, not a habitual criminal would suffer shock having faced abrupt threat of death by police officers or by criminals. Mims must have experienced extreme stress hearing police officers, his asserted protectors, threatening to shoot him for reasons unknown to him. I empathize with what must have been Mims' frightened, conflicted feeling entering the police car and continuing under authority of someone that recently threatened to shoot him. The police driving Mims to school rather than contacting his parents or other agency to provide comfort and counseling from his harrowing experience is more evidence of their disregard for his feelings. It did not occur to them that someone like him, young black-labeled male, would experience distress above feelings of inconvenience from the police assault that they addressed by driving him to school.

Lt. Bartlett's remark was self-serving and untrue, "It's part of stuff we have to deal with in Vallejo and unfortunately he got caught in the middle of it." The police do not deal with Mims' experience in Vallejo of being racial profiled by police as a criminal while reporting a crime. According to Bartlett's rationalization, any black-labeled American near a reported crime is at the wrong place at the wrong time and rightfully presumed an armed criminal whom police can assault and threaten with death.