



February 10, 2020

**Sent via email and U.S. certified mail to:**

Sheriff Manuel Gonzales III  
Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department  
400 Roma NW  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102  
mxgonzales@bernco.gov  
U.S. certified tracking # 70110470000030640283

Dear Sheriff Gonzales:

We write as a follow up to a settlement our client, Sherese Crawford, reached with Bernalillo County because two of your deputies, Deputy Patrick Rael and former Deputy Leonard Armijo, racially profiled Ms. Crawford on three separate occasions.

Ms. Crawford is an African-American federal law enforcement officer. In 2017, from January through the middle of May, she was on a temporary assignment in New Mexico from New York. These deputies reminded her that her skin color—not the reality of whether she has violated any laws and not the hard work she has put into becoming an exemplary law enforcement officer, herself—dictates how other law enforcement officers will treat her. Ms. Crawford is professional, accomplished, and law abiding. Still, these deputies stopped her three times in thirty days while driving two different rental cars—with out-of-state plates—on the same stretch of Interstate 40.

All three stops were pre-textual and baseless. Ms. Crawford was stopped once under the purported reasoning that her license plate did not come back on file when Deputy Armijo ran her plate. Ms. Crawford later checked with the rental company, and, of course the car was registered. The next two times Ms. Crawford was stopped, Deputy Rael reasoned that she was following too closely and passing on the right, respectively. Deputy Rael's reasoning for these stops were both incontrovertibly contradicted by his dash cam video.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this letter is not to rehash the facts of a case that has already been resolved. Rather, it was clear through litigating this case that your deputies pull over African American motorists at a much higher rate than they exist in the population in New Mexico<sup>1</sup> and there is a department-wide problem in that your deputies have not received meaningful training connected to cultural humility and implicit bias. As you know, training deputies to understand

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<sup>1</sup> The African American population in New Mexico is 2.6%. We were provided a snapshot of 82 stops from your officers from January 1, 2017 to July 4, 2017 and 17% percent of the stops were African American motorists (nearly 7 times the population of African Americans in New Mexico).

the impact of explicit and implicit bias on police-community relations is a key factor in reducing biased policing.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, we encourage you to institute the following measures:

1. Mandatory implicit bias training for all of your deputies;
  - a. Commitment to ongoing implicit bias training provided to all new deputies; and
2. Allow a review, by a qualified professional with experience working with law enforcement, of all policies and procedures to ensure they are free of bias and promote cultural humility in your department;
  - a. Commitment to implement resulting recommendations from the above-mentioned review and to scrutinize all newly considered policies and procedures to ensure they are free of bias and promote cultural humility in your department.

Instituting these measures is critical. We are witnessing before our very eyes a resurgence of unabashed racism—the type of racism that does not bother to disguise itself and that is unapologetic. Connected to this resurgence is growing racial tension between law enforcement and the community. Additionally, your department is not free of the distrust festering in our community towards law enforcement, which is evident in the ongoing consent decree litigation against your partner and allied law enforcement agency, the Albuquerque Police Department.

We respectfully request a meeting with you within two weeks to discuss whether BCSO intends to begin a process for implementation of these action items. Our office is committed to working with your department to promote unbiased policing. Therefore, we extend a formal offer to work with your office to aid in the process of implementing implicit bias training for your deputies by a professional qualified to conduct such trainings for law enforcement officers.

Sincerely,



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<sup>2</sup> Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. 2015. The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Implementation Guide: Moving from Recommendations to Action. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

*cc via email only:*

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