

Minneapolis police chief disciplines officer for speaking out about 'toxic culture'

JANUARY 09, 2021



Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo. Courtesy photo.

Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo formally reprimanded a female officer who spoke to a journalist anonymously about the department's "toxic culture" following the killing of George Floyd, according to disciplinary records posted to the city's website on Friday.

The move to discipline an officer for speaking frankly to the media is not surprising given the department's history of punishing officers who speak to the press without permission, especially critically. It comes on the heels of

the demotion of then-chief of staff Art Knight for saying the department was “going to get the same old white boys” if it didn’t change its hiring, training and promotion practices.

While the police chief and mayor have repeatedly promised “transformational change” following Floyd’s killing, disciplining an officer for criticizing the department publicly is likely to send a chilling effect through the department while reinforcing its deep-seated resistance to transparency.

The officer, using the pseudonym Megan Jones, talked to GQ reporter Laura Bassett for a story that appeared on June 10. “I am a Minneapolis police officer, something I probably should not be broadcasting right now, but I’m tired and want change,” she said. “I want better for my department and I wish it didn’t take the murder of George Floyd for this national conversation on police reform to be had.”

The officer, identified in disciplinary documents as Colleen Ryan, spoke about feeling like an “outcast” as a liberal feminist in a department made up of mostly straight, white, conservative men. She described a toxic culture in which the few Black and female officers are regularly ostracized, discipline for abuses is scant and a war-like “us versus them” mentality prevails.

Despite speaking anonymously, Ryan shared an identifying story with the reporter about carrying a sign at the 2016 Women’s March reading “Donald Trump is a racist.”

“I posted a picture of it on my private Facebook page and within eight hours, everyone knew, and no one would work with me,” Ryan is quoted

saying. “There were cops who never gave me a chance for that reason. I’m kind of notorious in the department because I don’t fit in.”

After the article was published, the police department received a complaint and an anonymous tip alleging Ryan was the officer called “Megan Jones” in the GQ article.

Ryan did not seek permission to speak to the press, which is required by department policy. Arradondo issued a written reprimand to Ryan on Dec. 2, with the disciplinary decision noting she “regretted the bad press the article generated for the Minneapolis Police Department.”

Bassett responded to the disciplinary action against her source on Twitter, writing “it’s gross and embarrassing that the Minneapolis Police Department is wasting efforts investigating/disciplining officers who speak out about the toxic culture there instead of dealing with the culture itself.

Ryan’s case was among the first to be posted to the city’s website on Friday as required under an agreement the city made in June with the state’s Department of Human Rights, which is currently investigating if the police department engaged in systemic discriminatory practices toward people of color.

Ryan told the GQ reporter she got into law enforcement because she didn’t like the way the law enforcement typically responded to domestic violence. As it happens, two of the other disciplinary decisions posted to the city’s website on Friday involve officers violating the department’s domestic violence policies.

While responding to a 911 call, one officer told a domestic abuse victim she was beautiful, made physical contact and gave her his personal cell phone number, according to the disciplinary document. The officer, Benjamin Chaput, texted with the woman but later blocked her number once their conversation started “going in a direction he did not want it to go.” The woman told investigators Chaput’s behavior made her uncomfortable. Chaput was suspended for 10 hours and received a written reprimand. His partner, Daniel Payne, also received a written reprimand on Dec. 2 for not following the department’s domestic violence policies during the call.

Last month, the *Reformer* inquired as to why the city had yet to publish any of the chief’s disciplinary decisions to its website as required by the agreement and written into the city’s ordinances.

The city claimed no disciplinary decisions had yet been finalized at the time the story was published on Dec. 23, yet all five of the disciplinary decisions published to the city’s website are dated at least three weeks before then.

A *Reformer* investigation in December found after reviewing 3,300 pages of disciplinary files that the department is slow to investigate complaints against officers, often meting minor disciplinary actions for serious misconduct, while a culture of secrecy conceals serious wrongdoing.

The city attorney’s office has not confirmed if the cases were held up by union grievances, which is not reflected in the files, or else why they were not able to be posted to the city’s website until a month after they were decided. Disciplinary decisions are required to “be immediately made available” under the court order.

Minneapolis Police Federation President Bob Kroll did not respond to an email asking if the union challenged any of the five disciplinary actions.

<https://outline.com/9B3zgA>

COPY

 Annotations · [Report a problem](#)

Outline is a free service for reading and annotating news articles. We remove the clutter so you can analyze and comment on the content. In today's climate of widespread misinformation, Outline empowers readers to verify the facts.

[HOME](#) · [TERMS](#) · [PRIVACY](#) · [DMCA](#) · [CONTACT](#)