

NEWS ANALYSIS



EVAN REINHARDT | SPARTAN DAILY

San Jose Police Department vehicles remain parked at the police station at 201 West Mission St., a few blocks from San Jose State, on Tuesday.

SJPD: Post-George Floyd protests

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NEWS EDITOR

After George Floyd was murdered by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin protests sparked across the U.S. and the world in a fight against police brutality, particularly against Black and Hispanic people.

The San Jose Police Department (SJPD) was criticized for its response to the protests in May 2020, particularly Jared Yuen, who fired projectiles into the crowd while yelling expletives at the crowd, according to a video released by SJPD on July 22, 2020.

Shaunn Cartwright, legal observer at the 2020 protests, said she was hit on the second day of the George Floyd protests.

"A legal observer is a witness at protests, we're not there on anybody's side, we don't carry signs or anything," Cartwright said.

Several protesters were injured in San Jose during the protests after police officers shot pepper spray projectiles, rubber bullets and tear gas into crowds, according to a June 10, 2020 San Jose Inside article.

Policies & reports

A September 2020 SJPD analysis of the department's handling of the George Floyd protests identified five key findings: a lack of training and experience, insufficient staffing, a need to review policies and protocols, insufficient equipment and poor media relations.

A Feb. 22 report by the independent OIR Group, found "Many of the force deployments and acts of police aggression surprised and infuriated crowd members and at times did more to provoke than to discourage further resistance."

The OIR group is a consulting firm that specializes in independent police oversight and review, according to their website.

San Jose State sociology professor Scott Myers-Lipton said he and William Armaline, associate professor of sociology and founding director of the SJSU Human Rights Institute, worked together on the Silicon Valley PAIN index, "which was their response to recent victims of police brutality at that time: George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor."

The Silicon Valley Pain Index

releases statistics every year that shows "white supremacy and income/wealth inequality in Santa Clara County"

"There's incredible inequality going on here," Myers-Lipton said.

A private Facebook group called "10-7ODSJ" was exposed for hundreds of posts made by retired and active members of SJPD calling Black Lives Matter supporters "racist idiots" in a June 26, 2020 exposé written by an anonymous California law enforcement officer.

In the same exposé, Islamophobic comments appeared about a Los Angeles Muslim woman who had her hijab pulled off by a police officer.

"Hell, I would've pulled it over her face," Mark Pimentel, then an active-duty San Jose motor unit officer said. Pimentel has since been terminated, according to a July 4, 2021 Mercury News article.

A Feb. 24 report by the San Jose Independent Police Auditor illuminated how the "Latino community was disproportionately targeted during the George Floyd protests."

Reforms

After facing significant calls for reforms in the wake of May 2020 protests, SJPD Chief Eddie Garcia announced his retirement on Aug. 3, 2020.

Anthony Mata, SJSU alumnus and current SJPD chief, was appointed to his position on March 22, 2021, according to the department's website.

In 1999, Mata was part of the fatal shooting of 46 year old Odest Mitchell, who was shot four times during a foot chase. Officers said they saw him holding a "shiny object" but an investigation by the Monterey County District Attorney's Office found he was holding a pair of sunglasses, according to a March 17, 2021 San Jose Inside article.

"When you keep promoting from within, I don't think you can expect much change," Shaunn Cartwright said.

Another reform implemented by the City of San Jose is the Reimagining Community Safety board, which hopes to help identify ways the police department intervenes with social issues and reduce noncriminal social conflicts,



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Two SJPD officers monitor five detained individuals during a drug arrest near SJSU on Aug. 25, 2021.

according to a March 17, 2021 City of San Jose report.

Some Reimagining Community Safety board members resigned on April 29, 2021, claiming the advisory group was trying to "downplay the need for police reform," according to an April 29, 2021 NBC Bay Area News article.

William Armaline, also a former Reimagining Community Safety board member, said things fell apart as the board moved forward.

"If we think we realized by the third and fourth meeting, we're having to argue with people, literally argue with people in the committee on whether or not racist police violence is a problem," Armaline said.

San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo signed the "Obama Foundation's Mayors Pledge" in 2020, which pledged to review SJPD's use of force policies, according to the San Jose Government website.

"They're just like, 'Oh, they're meeting the Obama recommendations. Great, moving on,' because everyone just wants this to pass," Cartwright said. "I think they need to recognize that there are people with permanent, life-altering injuries. There are people with permanent mental injuries from this."

Armaline said the Reimagining Community Safety board is expected to report its recommendations and implementations for community safety during the city council meeting on May 10.

Lou Dimes, president of Black Liberation and Collective Knowledge (B.L.A.C.K.) Outreach, a local community organization in San Jose, said action in San Jose has been hollow and performative.

"The sad thing is though, if you look in other cities, they followed the trend, but they actually got some stuff that actually had some

tangible change," Dimes said. "Pretty much all we have in San Jose is 'Black Lives Matter' flags and Barack Obama Boulevard."

Some of the recommendations included having more social workers and mental health specialists respond to certain calls while reducing the police budget.

The Reimagining Community Safety Board presented over 100 recommendations for reforms in policing to city council Tuesday night in an hour-long presentation which was cut short by Mayor Liccardo.

"Which is a testament to the fact that they just don't want to hear this stuff," Dimes said of Liccardo capping the presentation. "They don't care."

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