

[This is an email which Your Presenter sent to the Ames City Council regarding Crime In Ames, and the proper racial identification of perpetrators and victims. These email addresses were found at the City of Ames' Website for the then-incumbent Council Members, but here are deleted for privacy concerns. They rejected the proposal, and "missed the point" of it all in the process.]

[FROM: RJ Gardner]

[TO: City Council Members, City Attorney, Chief of Police]

SUBJECT: Crime in Ames; its Resolution; and, Lack of Racial Identifiers of Perpetrators & Victims.

Monday, August 4th, 2008

RE: Crime in Ames; its Resolution; and,
Lack of Racial Identifiers of Perpetrators & Victims.

Dear City Council Members:

This is my request that the City Council, for good cause shown herein, direct the Ames Police Chief to instruct his subordinates to include "race" among the publicly revealed reports and other "identifiers" regarding crime events and its perpetrators and victims. Doing this will help dispel the presently unfounded claims that only Black people are committing crime in Ames; fail in this, and it makes matters worse.

It is not right that people in Ames should blame a particular people for what they have not done.

It is very much right that we should blame a particular people for what they in fact have done.

There is an increasing number of people in Ames who are complaining, and doing so more and more both aloud and in print, about the sudden and very unwelcome increase in serious crime in this city. And these are people who are concerned, and they care greatly about these matters.

We are fast approaching a moment in our local history, unseen until it becomes a necessity in that "history," where a few individuals and/or groups of individuals, separately, or organized, or as an uncontrolled mob, will "take the law into their own hands" to solve, resolve, or requite, a matter of intense emotion and overwhelming fear. It concerns Crime and its Victims. And where crime touches upon the individual or family member(s), Fear governs; Fear rules; Fear triumphs.

The complainants are heard to blame this crime increase on the recent arrival of Black people with the last year or so, particularly blaming those Blacks from the South side of Chicago and similar locations. Perhaps they have some basis in fact for this conclusion. Perhaps not.

But can those Blacks, or any Blacks, be blamed for the crime increase here?

As it also happened during and after the crime wave in late 2007, the recent murder-suicide event

by a Black man at Casey's store on Lincoln Way (on Sunday, July 27th, 2008) has prompted individual "Letters To The Editor" of the Ames Tribune to say as much. Some believe race had nothing to do with it, others that race had everything to do with it.

These are comments come only from those determined enough to say something about the matter. The number of other Ames citizens who silently, or at least not as publicly, hold those same opinions is plainly much greater. Sometime, eventually, utterances will erupt into swift, and probably unlawful, hot-tempered action, and someone will "jump to unfortunate conclusions".

And this presents a problem for a particular minority of people whom the majority of other people believe are responsible for crime in Ames: they blame the Blacks.

Yet White people are nearly 90% of all the people in Ames. It ought to be believed that the majority of crime in Ames would be accomplished by the majority race in Ames.

Is this so? And if so, are the Blacks being wrongfully blamed for crime in Ames?

One way to prove or dis-prove the claim that Blacks are responsible for increasing crime is to review the race of the individuals involved in crime, both as perpetrator and as victim.

Unfortunately, presently the public has little opportunity to understand these important details: they are never told, so they never know, and thus must arrive at their own conclusions.

In an email from a properly responsible Police Department official, in response to my inquiry on this same subject of including one's race in any publicly released crime descriptions, I was told that it is the policy of the Ames Police Department to not include, in any Press Release or other "report" to the public, the race of anyone involved in a crime, whether perpetrator or victim, unless it is relating to an unknown perpetrator of a crime.

To compare: although the name, age, and a photograph of the murder suspect at Casey's store were released by law enforcement to newspapers, which plainly displayed his Black racial composition, yet he was not described as being "Black"; and the victim's name and age were released, but her race was not described at all.

Such a lack of knowledge provides opportunity for an often unfounded conjecture among the general populace, as seen and heard in the comments and complaints of so many more Ames citizens. And concealment of the facts which directly relate to the public safety, in some supposed and good-faith belief that such concealment is to the benefit of the general welfare of the people of Ames, is a serious error.

The Ames Tribune's newspaper policy is the same: they do not name the race of criminal suspects or victims, except when a suspect is unknown. Since the Tribune obtains much of its Crime Reports from the Ames Police Department, the newspaper is limited somewhat in what it can report, but when it does know, its policy apparently is to deprive us of such important knowledge.

But while Governments are to reveal this, hopefully voluntarily or by required records request, court decisions say news agencies are not required to tell the truth, nor anything else they don't want to print; which adds to the public safety problem of not reporting the racial aspect of crime in Ames.

This does us all no good in understanding what race is committing crimes in Ames.

And if one particular race of people is more responsible for crime in Ames than any other, then the people at large in Ames have a right to know this fact, and thereby lay proper blame upon the correct people, both as individuals and as a race, and then work to resolve the matter favorably to all concerned.

If Blacks are not responsible for the high crime rate in Ames, then the best way to prove that is to let the general public know these facts. And the quickest way to obtain the facts is to have the City Council direct the Police Chief to include, among the other "identifiers" of criminal circumstances, the race of the perpetrator and the race of the victim.

In this manner only, will the general populace understand who is committing crimes in Ames.

In this manner also, the crime problem can be rightly addressed and reduced if not eliminated.

For this reason, I ask the City Council of Ames to direct the Police Chief to include, in the publicly released reports, information regarding the race of any suspect or arrested individuals, and also the race of the victim, along with such details of the crime as are lawfully fit to be released.

And, I ask the City Council to encourage the Ames Tribune newspaper owner(s) and editor(s) to follow that lead, for the betterment of our city and its citizens - - all of them.

Towards that end, I thank the City Council in advance for this good work.

I ask each Council Member to comment to me regarding their opinion on this matter.

R.J. Gardner

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THESE ARE THEIR RESPONSES:

RESPONSES TO MY EMAIL:

RE: Crime in Ames; its Resolution; and, Lack of Racial Identifiers of Perpetrators & Victims.
From: [City Councilman] Dan Rice
Sent: Tue 8/05/08 12:24 PM
To: RJ Gardner [and "CC:" to other Council Members]

Cc: [City Attorney, Chief of Police]

Mr. Gardner,

My opinion in the matter of identifiers is "no." I will not encourage going down a path of making broad sweeping generalizations and assumptions about citizens of Ames. Further, I will do so by not engaging in any further dialogue rooted in the sorts of assumptions and conclusions you appear to be espousing in this and other communications. They are offensive to me and illustrate a perpetuation of racist attitudes.

Respectfully,
Dan Rice
First Ward
Ames City Council

Re: Crime in Ames; its Resolution; and, Lack of Racial Identifiers of Perpetrators & Victims.
From: [City Councilman] Jamie Larson
Sent: Tue 8/05/08 12:49 PM
To: RJ Gardner [and Other City Council Members]
Cc: [City Attorney, Chief of Police]

Mr. Gardner-

I agree with Dan Rice's comments as they relate to your past and most recent emails concerning your misguided conclusion that "poverty" equals "social disobedience" equals "crime" equals "race". [*] I, too, find your communications offensive and not productive in making Ames a more safe and welcoming community.

Jami Larson
[2ND WARD, AMES CITY COUNCIL] . . .
[* SEE FURTHER BELOW, AT "Laura Millsaps: Knowing the 'real story', 07/31/2008 Ames Tribune Column," FOR THE ACTUAL "SOURCE" FOR THESE "CONCLUSIONS"]

[SENT AUG 5TH, 2008 BY RJ GARDNER TO OTHER COUNCILMEN NOT RECEIVING A "CC:" FROM THESE COUNCIL MEMBERS]

Tuesday, August 5th, 2008

RE: Resist Aggressive Temptation, and read it for yourselves.

Dear Council Members,
Last Monday evening, August 4th, I sent to each of you, as Members of the Ames City Council, an email titled "Crime in Ames; its Resolution; and, Lack of Racial Identifiers of Perpetrators &

Victims." It is important that I now ask you to consider that email by applying your own views, unadorned by outside opinions, and arrive at your own conclusions, rejecting interference from others, particularly from those whose opinions you would perhaps otherwise respect.

(My Aug. 4th email request is associated, indirectly in that manner, with the Compact Disk I earlier gave to the City Clerk to distribute to each of you, there titled "You Be Good or You Be Gone...: Race & Crime in Ames" (or "Inclusiveness Commentary"), being an as objective as possible gathering of statistical and public record facts concerning racial matters having an impact upon Ames and upon all Iowa, followed by my Opinions).

As of today, I have received two responses from Council Members, which were copied ("cc:") to you, and I must intervene at this moment to correct, or perhaps to avoid, un-desired, un-wanted, un-intended problems, and/or mis-interpretations of what I wrote and of what I want done.

The responses of Councilmen Rice and Larson, with Mr. Larson concurring with the precedential opinion of Mr. Rice, are exceedingly hostile, rife with ideas, opinions, and intentions, which not only are NOT in my August 4th email, but also are NOT in my Inclusiveness Commentary CD (to which they have alluded); and they present views whose undercurrents say that as fellow Councilmen, You better go along with our opinions or you are a racist also. It is their right to say it - - until they are wrong. And here, they are wrong.

They indicate a more than simple opposition to my views. The intent in their text easily can be construed to direct you away from my request long before you have time to consider it on your own, even if you eventually disagree with me.

Terms used by them - - targeting you as much as me - - have a heavy handed, powerfully-worded (and hopefully a completely ignorant) forcefulness of an Very Aggressive Suggestion, with an inducing magnetism inclined to draw you towards their views, to the exclusion of both mine and yours. They press upon such hot-button words as "racist," and "broad sweeping generalizations, assumptions," and "misguided conclusions." They have lost their objectivity. Please do not lose yours.

Let me suggest that each of you, as Council Members, read my August 4th email for yourselves, and then objectivity arrive at your own conclusions, if that is possible, in view of the Aggressive Suggestions set forth before you from others.

However, life is full of aggressiveness, and brimming with suggestions that are not always representing matters as the truly are.

R.J. Gardner

COUNCIL MEMBER's REPLIES:

Re: Resist Aggressive Temptation, and read it for yourselves.

From: Matthew Goodman
Sent: Thu 8/07/08 3:57 PM
To: RJ Gardner
Cc: [Mayor and City Council Members, City Attorney, Chief of Police]

RJ,

I did not respond to your email, because other council members made the points necessary. I didn't find these frank characterizations aggressive. I am surprised you do. I do not think that was there intent. To be frank myself, I thought they all gave your ideas too much credit. I just thought the idea of legislating waistlines was a bit silly, so I let someone else respond. Since you seem to want a response from us all, there is mine. Take care.

Matthew Goodman
At-Large Ames City Councilman

On Aug 6, 2008, at 11:40 AM, Jim Popken wrote:

R.J. Gardner

I have resisted the "Aggressive Temptation". I have composed several emails quite similar to Dan Rice's but had resisted sending them. [. .]

[AN EMAIL WITH ADDED TEXT. WHY HE DID NOT "REPLY" WITH HIS OWN EMAIL TEXT?]

[THIS ARTICLE MAY BE WHERE COUNCIL MEMBER RICE GOT HIS "poverty" equals "social disobedience" equals "crime" equals "race" IDEAS]

Laura Millsaps: Knowing the 'real story'
07/31/2008 [AMES TRIBUNE, COLUMN]
Updated 08/01/2008 11:27:59 AM CDT

Newspaper reporters often condense an intense effort in a very short amount of time trying to get a story, the "real story," as we say. We want our facts straight. We want all of them. We want the details that will make our readers understand what really happened.

In Tuesday's paper, The Tribune covered the shooting death of Lacrissa Davis by her boyfriend Tony Hayes, who is believed to have taken his own life after a chase and gunfight with area police officers. The paper provided coverage of the incident, a story that established a history of domestic abuse between the two, and even a timeline of events the day of the shooting. We had pictures.

Crime coverage, especially a particularly unspeakable one like this one, has its shortcomings. Though reporters try to deal, like the police, in the facts of the case, they are often not the "real story."

One only has to look at the comments posted about the story on The Tribune's Web site to find it. In just a few tense days, all the anger and fear about poverty and crime arriving unasked for from Chicago has surged back into the community's mindset, just as it did last fall.

Reporters are trained to look at a news story from all angles. It gets exhausting, and the community's reaction to this murder-suicide is no different, trying to consider race relations, crime statistics, patterns of violence.

Sometimes it is better to stop seeing angles and instead turn it inside-out. When Tony Hayes shot and killed Laci Davis, all the old Chicago arguments came to the fore. It's ironic, but when another man, Ronald Beaton, was arrested and charged with attempted murder for allegedly beating his wife with a hammer, there was no public outcry of shame. Beaton is white. He's also from Mid-Iowa.

Nobody asked the residential history of Cody Michael Burns, who pleaded guilty to false imprisonment and domestic abuse assault when he forced his girlfriend into his car, kept her captive and drove into a ditch in an attempt to kill them both.

People didn't ask where Brandon Tyerman came from when he was charged with stalking and over 60 violations of a no-contact order between him and his wife.

These are just a few examples.

Often the "real story" is found in one small detail, an evocative irony that makes a reporter swallow hard when they see it.

Contained in the case file regarding Tony Hayes' domestic abuse assault charge in January is the order of protection filed on behalf of Laci Davis. On this form, there is a box to check: "FIREARMS WARNING for law enforcement." It's supposed to let police know, if the threatening party violates the no-contact order, they may possess a gun.

It's a pretty big box, about two-thirds of an inch square.

There is no casually dashed off check mark in that box. The entire thing is filled with a big "X," from corner to corner, and from corner to corner again. It's easy to imagine Davis trembling a little as she told the judge that box needed to be checked.

She knew. She knew what this was about before any of the rest of us. It was about a man and a woman in a downward spiral of violence. It was about control and anger and flight and fear. It was about that big "X" that she hoped would let the courts and law enforcement know what they might be in for because she had already seen it. She knew the "real story."

It's an all-too-common one and affects women of all races and income levels, no matter where they call home, Chicago or Ames or anywhere else. And like a lot of other women just like Laci Davis, by the time the courts, the police and the news reporters get involved in the "real story," it's often too late for it to have a good ending.

[THE ABOVE ARE AN EXAMPLES OF HOW PRESUMABLY INTELLIGENT MEN ARRIVE AT "CONCLUSIONS" WHICH DO NOT FIT THE REALITY OF THE FACTS.]