
From: Los Angeles Citizen <[REDACTED]>
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To: Police Commission
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LAPD Police Commissioners, Chief McDonnell, the entire LAPD and Citizens,

As the LAPD continues to struggle to achieve graduating recruit classes of the stated goal of sixty per class, I have noticed something that should be corrected in the categorization of the recruit graduates. The LAPD announcement divides the graduates by ethnicity. The latest class is categorized thusly: 17 Hispanics, 2 Caucasians, 1 Asian, and 1 African-American. If the LAPD and City of Los Angeles insist on dividing people by arbitrary collective identity politics groupings they could at least be accurate and they are not.

Ethnicity and race are not the same thing. Race is a grouping based on physical characteristics. Society assigns race based on outward traits like facial features and skin tone. It functions as a social and political construct rather than a fixed biological fact although this can be debated.

Ethnicity is a grouping based on shared culture. It includes language, history, religion and national origin. People typically self-identify with an ethnic group based on learned heritage and traditions.

The LAPD is classifying people by race. Should we be identifying and dividing each other by race? What kind of example is this to set for our young people and future officers? We should at least strive to be accurate. For example, an Asian could be of the Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian or any number of ethnic groupings. A Caucasian, better described as a European American, could be of Irish, Polish, Hungarian, Italian, Greek or any of the numerous ethnicities of the European continent.

So what is the point? I am suggesting that dividing people as the LAPD has done in graduation announcements is inaccurate and unnecessary and, if continued, should be changed and remedied. After all, words matter and can consciously or unconsciously affect perceptions. We should be seeing people as not representations of collective identity but as individuals. Yes, there is a difference between race and identity. Ideally, when an officer puts on the uniform he or she becomes "Blue" and protects and serves all people professionally, impartially and with equal due respect to all individuals regardless of their backgrounds.

Respectfully,
Steve Reilly