

INTRODUCTION:

On 05 May 2016, during a class for new police recruits on Stress Management at the CPD Training Academy, Training Officer A discussed factors that can affect the way the body handles stress, including diabetes. Training Officer A singled out the black recruits in the class and warned them about their higher risk of contracting diabetes. In doing so, Training Officer A used racially-biased language to refer to those recruits. One of the recruits in this class wrote about this incident in one of the anonymous surveys that recruits routinely complete regarding their instruction. The recruit alleged that Training Officer A referred to one of the recruits in the class as a “darkie.” Sergeant A discovered that survey response and initiated this complaint to investigate the allegation of misconduct.

ALLEGATIONS:

On 23 June 2016, at approximately 1642 hours, Sergeant A telephoned the Independent Police Review Authority (“IPRA”) and registered this complaint on behalf of the Department with IPRA Investigator A. It is alleged that on 05 May 2016, at approximately 0730-0925 hours, in classroom XXX at the CPD Training Academy at XXXX W. Jackson Blvd, **Accused Training Officer A, Employee #XXXXX, Unit XXX: 1)** used racially-biased language while teaching a class of recruits, in violation of Rule 8; and **2)** brought discredit on the Department, in violation of Rule 2.

APPLICABLE RULES:

- Rule 2: Prohibits any action or conduct which impedes the Department’s efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department.
- Rule 8: Prohibits disrespect to or maltreatment of any person, while on or off duty.

INVESTIGATION:

An **Initiation Report** from Sergeant A reveals that he was reviewing critiques from recruit class XXXX when he saw the following critique:

...There is one issue that happened in one of our classes that a lot of people were very offended by, [Training O]fficer A called one of the recruits a darkie. I personally didn’t think it was funny and very unprofessional and made it ok for fellow recruits to use derogatory terms towards each other. I think in order for the Chicago [P]olice [D]epartment to change its image it must start internally and reevaluate personal (sic) like Officer A.

Upon seeing this critique, Sergeant A notified Lieutenant and telephoned IPRA to initiate this investigation. (Attachment 3)

The Reporting Investigator obtained **witness reports** from the members of recruit class XXXX on 29 July 2016 and from members of recruit class XXXX on 18 August 2016. In both

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instances, the Reporting Investigator addressed the class as a whole, informed the recruits there was an allegation that Training Officer A used the word “darkie” in a class, and instructed them to write reports about whether they heard him say that word or anything else like it. The Reporting Investigator then observed the report writing to ensure that everyone wrote their own reports. In total, 56 reports were collected from the two recruit classes: 29 from class XXXX and 27 from class XXXX.

In their reports, **Witness Recruits Recruit 1, Recruit 2, Recruit 3, Recruit 4, Recruit 5, Recruit 6, Recruit 7, Recruit 8, Recruit 9, Recruit 10, Recruit 11, Recruit 12, Recruit 13, Recruit 14,¹ Recruit 15, and Recruit 16²** recalled being in a class that Training Officer A was instructing when he said something about the African American community being more susceptible to contract diabetes than people of other races. Training Officer A then called attention to one or more black recruits in the class and particularly warned them to be careful. These recruits described Training Officer A using a racial term when he gave this warning, either “darkie,” “dark one,” “dark fellow,” “dark guy,” “blackie,” “colored guy,” or words to that effect. Recruits 9, 10, and 14 identified Recruit 10 as the person at whom the remark was directed. Recruit 2 also said that the remark was directed toward a specific recruit, but he did not identify that person. Recruit 6 added that he felt uncomfortable when Training Officer A used this term and that Training Officer A did not provide this specific instruction in a professional manner. Recruit 13 added that the class laughed off the comment. He attributed that reaction to the fact that it was in the first few weeks of their time at the academy and they were intimidated. Several of the recruits (Recruits 1, 5, and 7) did not believe that Training Officer A intended to be malicious but acknowledged that it was a poor choice of words that could be taken offensively. (Attachments 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 30, 31, 32, 34, 39)

In their reports, **Witness Recruits Recruit 17, Recruit 18, Recruit 19, Recruit 20, Recruit 21, Recruit 22, and Recruit 23³** recalled hearing Training Officer A use the term “darkie,” “dark one,” “dark fellow,” “colored guy,” or words to that effect, but they did not provide details about the context. Recruits 19 and 21 identified Recruit 10 as the one at whom the remark was directed. Recruits 18, 22, and 23 also said the remark was directed toward a specific recruit but did not identify that person. Recruit 17 said that he had been taking notes from the PowerPoint presentation and did not know who or what Training Officer A was talking about when he said, “You darkie.” Recruit 18 added that some of the other recruits in the class laughed. (Attachments 4, 6, 7, 15, 20, 27, 28)

Witness Recruits Recruit 24, Recruit 25, and Recruit 26⁴ recalled Training Officer A saying something about either a specific person in class or African Americans in general getting diabetes due to their race, but they did not specify the language that Training Officer A used. Recruit 26 added that the term was “inappropriate” and “incredibly disrespectful” but said he believed Training Officer A said it in a joking manner. (Attachments 12, 36, 51)

¹ Recruit 14, who is a member of recruit class XXXX, was not present when the Reporting Investigator met with that class on 29 July 2016. Academy command staff instructed him to complete his report upon his return to class.

² Of these sixteen recruits, only Recruits 15 and 16 are from class XXXX. The rest are from XXXX.

³ These seven recruits were all in class XXXX.

⁴ Recruit 24 is in class XXXX; Recruits 25 and 26 are in class XXXX.

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Witness Recruits Recruit 27⁵ did not recall hearing Training Officer A use the word “darkie,” but recalled there being a big reaction in class to something that Training Officer A said. Other recruits talked about it after the class. When Recruit 27 asked what they were talking about, people identified the word “darkie” as the term that Training Officer A used. (Attachment 8)

Witness Recruits Recruit 28, Recruit 29, Recruit 30, and Recruit 31⁶ did not recall the incident but heard other recruits talking about Training Officer A calling a recruit a “darkie” or “dark one.” (Attachments 14, 18, 26, 29)

Witness Recruit Recruit 32⁷ did not recall the specific incident under investigation but she recalled Training Officer A using racial slurs in a “joking manner” during instruction on unknown dates. Recruit 32 described Training Officer A’s language as inappropriate and said that it was specifically targeted towards black and Hispanic recruits. (Attachment 37)

Witness Recruits Recruit 33, Recruit 34, Recruit 35, Recruit 36, Recruit 37, Recruit 38, Recruit 39, Recruit 40, Recruit 41, Recruit 42, Recruit 43, Recruit 44, Recruit 45, Recruit 46, Recruit 47, Recruit 48, Recruit 49, Recruit 50, Recruit 51, Recruit 52, and Recruit 53⁸ did not recall the incident. Recruit 35 added that Training Officer A was a “strict instructor.” Recruit 36 added that he may not have been present for the class. Recruit 37 added that the comment may have been made in a low voice which prevented him from hearing it. The other recruits did not provide any further information. (Attachments 19, 23, 35, 38, 40, 43, 44-50, 52-59)

Witness Recruits Recruit 54, Recruit 55, and Recruit 56⁹ did not recall hearing any unnecessary comments from Training Officer A. Recruit 54 added that he has learned a lot from Training Officer A and said it was “unimaginable” that Training Officer A would use the language that was alleged. Recruit 55 added that he had a lot of respect for all of the instructors at the Academy, including Training Officer A, and that he has enjoyed Training Officer A’s classes. Recruit 56 added that Training Officer A seemed professional to him. (Attachments 33, 41, 42)

In a statement to IPRA on 25 August 2016, **Accused Training Officer A** acknowledged that he taught a class on stress management to two classes of recruits. According to Training Officer A, that instruction included a discussion about things that affect the stress hormone cortisol. Training Officer A talked about glucose dysregulation, which is related to diabetes. According to Training Officer A, black males are at highest risk for contracting diabetes.¹⁰ When he asked the recruits in the class who was at highest risk, no one appeared to know the answer. Training Officer A then pointed at several black recruits and said, “You darkly-complected fellas

⁵ Recruit 27 is in class XXXX.

⁶ These recruits are all in class XXXX.

⁷ Recruit 32 is in class XXXX.

⁸ Recruit 53, was not present when the Reporting Investigator met with her class on 18 August 2016. Academy command staff instructed her to complete her report upon her return to class. Of these recruits, only Recruits 33 and 34 are from class XXXX. The rest are from class XXXX.

⁹ These recruits are all in class XXXX.

¹⁰ Training Officer A could not recall where he got that information.

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are number one on the list.”¹¹ Training Officer A then warned those recruits to watch their diets if they wanted to live long enough to collect their pensions. Training Officer A later said that he may have used the word “people” or “guys” instead of “fellas,” but denied using the word “darkie.” Training Officer A said that he has “absolutely” referred to black recruits as “darkly-complected” “a hundred times” in the past.¹² He believed that the recruits took it in a positive way, because he was trying to save their lives by warning them about diabetes. Training Officer A acknowledged that he did not have any medical training and that he based this warning on a statistic whose source he could not remember.

Training Officer A could not recall anything “out of the ordinary”¹³ about the reaction that the recruits in the class had when he gave the instruction about black males and diabetes. According to Training Officer A, no one laughed or objected in any way. According to Training Officer A, “there was nothing untoward or unusual about what happened in class.”¹⁴ Training Officer A denied that he used any racially-biased language while teaching this class. He also denied bringing discredit upon the department and added that he was trying to help the recruits to stay healthier. (Attachments 66-68)

CONCLUSION:

It is alleged that Training Officer A used racially-biased language while teaching a class of recruits. A majority of the recruits in class XXXX reported that they either heard the incident directly or from other people in the class. Although they varied about the exact word that Training Officer A used, the details in their reports were consistent as to the circumstances. Although several of the recruits believed that Training Officer A was joking, they also acknowledged that it was not appropriate language to use in class. Additionally, another four recruits from class XXXX remembered the incident. Another recruit from class XXXX did not recall this specific incident but reported that Training Officer A frequently used racial slurs in a joking manner during other classes.

According to Training Officer A, the term he used was something to the effect of “darkly-complected fellas.” In his statement to IPRA, Training Officer A failed to express any understanding that such language was inappropriate. In fact, he asserted that he has used such language many times in the past. Training Officer A believed that he was doing the right thing by advising specific recruits about the risks of diabetes, despite the fact that he has no medical training and that he based his warnings on a statistic whose source he could not recall. Training Officer A singled out black recruits to receive this extra warning, and he used language that was, at best, questionable when he did so. Even the recruits who believed Training Officer A used the term in a joking manner acknowledged that it was a poor choice of words and that people may have been offended. Therefore, the Reporting Investigator recommends a finding of **Sustained** for the allegation that Training Officer A used racially-biased language while teaching a class of recruits.

¹¹ Attachment 66, page 9, lines 16-17

¹² Attachment 66, page 10, lines 5-8

¹³ Attachment 66, page 14, line 23

¹⁴ Attachment 66, page 14, lines 8-10

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It is also alleged that Training Officer A brought discredit on the Department. As someone who is training new recruits about how to be police officers with the Chicago Police Department, Training Officer A should exhibit the type of behavior that CPD requires officers to use when they are interacting with citizens. Instead, by using racially-biased language in front of a class of approximately 56 recruits, Training Officer A wrongly demonstrated to those recruits that such language is acceptable. As noted by the unknown recruit who completed the anonymous critique that launched this investigation, Training Officer A “made it ok for fellow recruits to use derogatory terms toward each other.” Many of the recruits in the class also expressed their discomfort with what they believed to be inappropriate behavior. Therefore, the Reporting Investigator recommends a finding of **Sustained** for the allegation that Training Officer A brought discredit upon the Department by his overall actions.

FINDINGS:

Accused

Training Officer A, Employee #XXXXX, Unit XXX

Allegation #1

Sustained – Violation of Rule 8, “Disrespect or Maltreatment of any person, while on or off duty,” in that on 05 May 2016, at approximately 0730-0925 hours, in classroom XXX at the CPD Training Academy at XXXX W. Jackson, Training Officer A, Employee #XXXXX, Unit XXX, used racially-biased language while teaching a class of recruits.

Allegation #2

Sustained – Violation of Rule 2, “Any action or conduct which impedes the Department’s efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department,” in that on 05 May 2016, at approximately 0730-0925 hours, in classroom XXX at the CPD Training Academy at XXXX W. Jackson, Training Officer A, Employee #XXXXX, Unit XXX, by his overall actions and conduct did bring discredit upon the Department.