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Mayor Muriel Bowser

Office of Police Complaints

Office of Police Complaints



Office Hours

Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm

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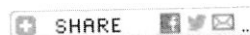
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Agency Performance



Mediation in Fiscal Year 2008: Insulting Language and Conduct

A citizen filed a complaint against an officer who had pulled her over for a traffic stop, alleging the officer subjected her to insulting language and conduct.

At mediation, the complainant described the incident as she remembered it: With her daughter in the back seat, she was driving through busy traffic on the highway. She crossed into another lane to exit. Apparently, she had pulled in front of the officer, who put on his siren and lights. She put on her hazard lights, and continued driving until she was off the exit ramp and could find a place to pull over safely. The officer began to yell at her over the loudspeaker to pull over. Once she stopped, she began feeling very nervous and flustered. Because she could not roll down the window, she opened the door to speak with the officer. The officer yelled at her and spoke to her in an unnecessarily rude tone. At one point, the officer referred to the daughter in the back seat as the complainant's granddaughter, which she took to be an age-based insult. The officer ultimately issued a ticket for failing to signal. The complainant added that while she believes she was driving properly, she was

not trying to contest the ticket. She simply objected to the officer's treatment of her and she was particularly concerned because her daughter had been very disturbed by the incident.

The officer stated that he did not recall the incident specifically. However, based on the complainant's description of the incident, he stated that certain actions, such as failing to stop when instructed and opening the car door instead of lowering the window, could be interpreted as a threat to the safety of the officer. The officer also clearly stated that, based on the complainant's description of the incident and the information on the ticket, he could have given a ticket for a more severe infraction than the one he actually issued. He had chosen to give the complainant a break once it was clear that she posed no threat. He acknowledged that he might have come across as unnecessarily harsh. He added that he was particularly sorry that the complainant's daughter had been so upset after the incident, because the last thing an officer wants to do is make children afraid or distrustful of the police.

The parties continued to discuss the situation until they were satisfied that all issues had been addressed. At the conclusion of the mediation, the officer and the complainant agreed that the complainant would bring her daughter to the station, to allow the officer to meet the girl and engage her in some of the fun activities that the police department makes available to local children. Both parties agreed that the mediation session sufficiently resolved the case.

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