

August 30, 2017

Dear Mayor Warren, President Scott, Public Safety Committee Chair McFadden, Chief Ciminelli, and Deputy Chief Harris:

We were surprised and concerned to read in the City Council legislation passed August 15, 2017 that an ordinance had been approved 9-0 to appropriate the sum of \$15,000 from federal forfeiture funds for Rochester Police Department personnel to attend the Force Science Certification Course to be hosted by the Locust Club September 25-29, 2017.

The Force Science Institute (www.forcescience.org) is the brainchild of Dr. William J. Lewinski, a “self-proclaimed authority in police use of force” who received his doctorate from a “distance-learning school.” Most of his “research” has been published in “law-enforcement magazines,” according to the attached article, *Canada Warned about Controversial Police Shooting Expert* by the CBC News in 2013. Several articles have been written about Lewinski in the past few years, including one in the *New York Times (NYT)* in 2015, *Training Officers to Shoot First, and He Will Answer Questions Later* (attached). Lewinski has consistently testified on behalf of police as a professional witness in over 200 court cases and has been paid \$1,000 per hour for these testimonies.

Quotes from these two articles follow:

- NYT: Lewinski’s “conclusions are consistent: The officer acted appropriately, even when shooting an unarmed person. Even when shooting someone in the back. Even when witness testimony, forensic evidence or video footage contradicts the officer’s story.”
- NYT: Lewinski’s “research has been roundly criticized by experts.” An editor for the *American Journal of Psychology*, [Lisa Fournier, who is also an attorney,] “called his work “pseudoscience.’ The Justice Department denounced his findings as ‘lacking in both foundation and reliability.’”
- CBC: Fournier wrote in 2012 court documents (attached) about Lewinski’s research, “In summary, this study is invalid and unreliable ... In my opinion, this study questions the ability of Mr. Lewinski to apply relevant and reliable data to answer a question or support an argument.”
- NYT: Lewinski explains police shootings using theories he has invented. He says officers can suffer from “inattentive blindness, in which the brain is so focused on one task that it blocks out everything else. When an officer’s version of events is disproved by video or forensic evidence,” it’s due to inattentive blindness, according to Lewinski. Yet he has “acknowledged that there was no clear way to distinguish inattentive blindness from lying.”
- CBC: John Burton, a civil rights lawyer who has cross-examined Lewinski, says “He will reverse-engineer from his conclusion, which is that the shooting was justified, to explain away whatever physical evidence doesn’t fit that conclusion.”
- CBC: Roger Clark, a veteran of the Los Angeles Police Department, says “he is troubled that Lewinski trains police officers...about how stress and perception during a lethal encounter can affect an officer’s actions during, and memory after, the event.” The Force Institute “has determined

how, after an officer uses lethal force, ‘investigators can best *mine* officers’ memories and avoid interviewing mistakes...”

- CBC: Clark says that “if Lewinski’s seminars are reflective of his court testimony, he is training officers to use lethal force unnecessarily, and he is also training them how to justify it after the fact. ‘This is about people’s lives,’ Clark said. ‘And I want to say it very bluntly: if people embrace this kind of mentality, people are going to die—unnecessarily. That is what needs to be said here.’”

We are disappointed and dismayed that City Council has already appropriated \$15,000 for this training. But it’s not too late to stop it. In fact,

**WE URGENTLY REQUEST YOU TO STOP THIS
SCHEDULED FORCE SCIENCE INSTITUTE TRAINING.**

We do not want our RPD officers to be trained to believe that all shootings can be justified based on Force Science training. **We call on City Council to please reverse your decision and direct RPD to cancel the training.** Train them instead on anti-bias, anti-racism, de-escalation techniques, dealing with mentally ill and/or transgender individuals, body camera use, etc.. These issues are much more important for training efforts to be spent on.

We request a conversation about this before the City Council meeting on September 19.

Sincerely,

Police Accountability Board Organizing Committee
Enough Is Enough
Coalition for Police Reform
United Christian Leadership Ministry
New York Civil Liberties Union
Facing Race, Embracing Equity
Rochester ACTS