



CITY OF CHICAGO  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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# **Recommendation to Inform and Improve Future Investigations Regarding Allegations of Using Racial Slurs**

September 30, 2026

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September 30, 2026

Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC) § 2-56-230(c), the Public Safety section of the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts reviews of individual closed disciplinary investigations conducted by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA). Based on those reviews, OIG may make recommendations to inform and improve future disciplinary investigations to ensure that they are complete, thorough, objective, and fair.

During its regular review of closed disciplinary investigations conducted by COPA and BIA, OIG observed 19 examples of misconduct investigations involving the use of racial slurs by CPD members.

These are sensitive and important investigations but responding to them consistently poses a range of challenges for COPA and BIA. Among other things, context often matters in assessing the intent and seriousness of a violation; documenting the precise language used can be critical; and an officer's disciplinary history can inform the appropriate discipline.

As we reviewed the investigative reports in these matters, we found they often did not clearly memorialize the aggravating and mitigating factors underlying their disciplinary recommendations, making it difficult to evaluate whether outcomes were consistent. For example, while 16 of the 19 investigative reports recommended suspensions of 30 days or less, in one instance the investigative agency recommended a 60-day suspension and relief of police powers, and in two instances reports recommended termination (although in those two cases the nature of the facts made it clear why termination was recommended). We also observed reports recommending the same sanctions for officers with and without prior similar violations.

We recognize that every case must be considered on its own facts, and that factual differences may have driven the divergent outcomes in the cases we reviewed, but there is no way to know why outcomes differ unless COPA and BIA document their analysis and consideration of aggravating and mitigating factors,

We also observed inconsistencies in whether the reports recommended additional training for the officers found to have used racial slurs. Approximately half the reports recommended training to improve cultural competency and half did not, with virtually no reports explaining their reasoning on this point. CPD already provides cultural competency training for its officers, and there is room to question whether a lack of training is the problem when an officer uses a racial slur, but if training is to be part of CPD's response to these incidents, it is important to have a principle-based approach for defining when additional training is appropriate. Absent memorialized reasoning on this point, consistency is difficult to achieve and impossible to evaluate.

In order to inform and improve future investigations, OIG recommended that COPA and BIA: (1) determine whether additional training is necessary for CPD members to address the prohibition of the use of racial slurs while on or off-duty and to improve cultural competency, (2) ensure consistency and fairness in disciplinary recommendations for sustained findings involving the use of racial slurs by documenting all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history, and (3) ensure allegations served to accused CPD members are accurate

and consistent, including the proper spelling of all quoted words that the accused is alleged to have stated.

In response to OIG's recommendations, COPA noted that COPA does consider CPD members' disciplinary and complimentary history in each investigation, and "has been working on internal guidance to improve its disciplinary recommendations, which seeks to include a standardized list of aggravating and mitigating factors." COPA added that moving forward it will directly quote CPD members' language in its allegations when possible, but it may not know the exact language used when allegations must be served.

In response to OIG's recommendations, BIA confirmed that CPD determines whether additional training is required for its members on an annual basis, including curriculum related to cultural competency, the prohibitions of racial profiling and other bias-based policing, and "tailors its annual Training Plan based on a Needs Assessment Report." Further, BIA confirmed that "CPD considers all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history," and "while CPD strives to ensure that the allegations served on a member are accurate, it can be the case that an investigation uncovers facts that vary from these allegations."

OIG's letter to COPA and BIA containing its recommendations is attached in Appendix A, COPA's response is attached in Appendix B, and BIA's response is attached in Appendix C.

# Appendix A | OIG Letter



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## Via Electronic Mail

May 18, 2026

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Re: Recommendation to Inform and Improve Future Investigations Regarding Allegations of  
Using Racial Slurs

Dear Chief Moore and Chief Administrator White:

Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC) §§ 2-56-30 and -230, the Public Safety section of the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) writes to recommend measures to inform and improve future disciplinary investigations conducted by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA) and the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA), to ensure CPD members who have sustained allegations of racial or ethnic bias verbal abuse are disciplined in a consistent and fair manner.

### **CPD Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, & 9, General Orders G02-01 Protection of Human Rights, and G02-04 Prohibitions Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias-Based Policing**

CPD Rules and Regulations serves as CPD's governing document and outlines the goals and standards of conduct expected of CPD members. CPD's Rules and Regulations contains its Rules of Conduct, which delineate conduct prohibited by Department members. Violations of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 are commonly cited in investigations that include allegations of racial or ethnic bias, and verbal abuse. Rule 2 prohibits "[a]ny action which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department," and Rule 3 prohibits "[a]ny failure to promote the Department's efforts to implement its policy or accomplish its goals." Rule 8 prohibits the "disrespect to or maltreatment of any person," and Rule 9 prohibits CPD members from

engaging in “any unjustified verbal or physical altercation with any person.” Rules 2, 3, 8, and 9 apply to CPD members while on and off-duty. Lastly, Rule 6 prohibits CPD members from disobeying written or oral orders and directives.<sup>1</sup>

General Order G02-01 “Protection of Human Rights,” details policy and practices which require CPD members to respect and protect community members’ human rights as prescribed by law. Specifically, CPD members are to “interact with all members of the public in an unbiased, fair and respectful manner.” Further, Department members are prohibited from directing any derogatory terms toward any individual and using language “intended to taunt or denigrate an individual, including using racist or derogatory language.”<sup>2</sup>

General Order G02-04 “Prohibitions Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias-Based Policing,” dictates that CPD members treat all individuals with courtesy, dignity, and fairness, “within the context of their trauma-informed training techniques by maintaining a sensitive approach.” The expectation is that CPD members speak and behave in a professional manner, including not using racist and/or disparaging language while on or off-duty.<sup>3</sup>

During its regular review of closed disciplinary investigations conducted by BIA and COPA pursuant to MCC § 2-56-230(c), OIG identified noteworthy inconsistencies in the disciplinary recommendations of CPD members who have sustained allegations of racial bias and verbal abuse.

### **Definitions of Racial Epithet and Racial Slur, Historical Context, and Cultural Competency**

Based on OIG’s review of individual closed disciplinary investigations, BIA and COPA have utilized the terms, “racial epithet,” and “racial slur,” synonymously to describe CPD members’ language in allegations of verbal abuse and bias investigations. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an epithet as, “a characterizing word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name of a person or thing,” that can be disparaging or abusive in nature.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, a slur is “an insulting or disparaging remark or innuendo,” generally used to shame and/or degrade an individual.<sup>5</sup> An epithet can have a negative connotation or it can be merely descriptive, whereas a slur is used with the intent to be derogatory and offensive. In the context of race, epithets and slurs are used to demean and disempower individuals belonging to a specific racial group.

Historically, the term n--ger, was used to insult Black and/or any dark-skinned individual and deliberately express racist beliefs. This term is described by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as, “almost certainly the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English, a term expressive of hatred and bigotry.”<sup>6</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) characterizes the term n--ger as “degrading, dehumanizing,” and the embodiment of traumatic

<sup>1</sup> Chicago Police Department, “Rules and Regulations of the Chicago Police Department,” April 16, 2015, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6412>.

<sup>2</sup> Chicago Police Department, “General Order G02-01 Protection of Human Rights,” April 30, 2026, accessed May 18, 2026, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6194>.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Police Department, “General Order G02-04 Prohibitions Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias-Based Policing,” April 30, 2026, accessed May 18, 2026, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6888>.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epithet>.

<sup>5</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slur>.

<sup>6</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nigger>.

memories and inhuman hatred.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, the term n--ger was introduced in the early 1800s and was used as “anti-Black prejudice...a term of exclusion, a verbal justification for discrimination,” and to ingrain the feeling of inferiority during slavery, which involved the abduction, ownership, forced labor, and abuse of African descendants by predominately Southern, white individuals, and the Jim Crow era, which enforced racial segregation and discrimination against Black people as well as perpetuated racial inequality.<sup>8</sup>

The widespread use of the term n--ger by law enforcement members, as a form of “explicit racism,” has been deeply rooted in the enslavement of Black people and white supremacy. In fact, “Slave Patrols,” were “among the first public policing organizations formed in the American colonies,” according to a report by The Brennan Center for Justice. This report further states:

Policing in the early American colonies was often less about crime control than maintaining the racial social order, ensuring a stable labor force, and protecting the property interests of the white privileged class...white supremacy was the law these earliest public officials were sworn to enforce.<sup>9</sup>

Considering the word’s deeply rooted, racially charged and violent history in the United States, hearing or being called n--ger or n--ga can carry emotional and historical impact, regardless of the intent behind its use. Moreover, its use by government and authority figures further compounds its harmful impact on members of the public. In modern-day policing, the use of racial slurs and overtly racist conduct directed toward Black individuals threatens to continue to erode public trust, and police officers who use such language must be held accountable through disciplinary measures.

### **Relevant Misconduct Investigations**

The investigations described below are a sample of the relevant ones which OIG reviewed pursuant to MCC § 2-56-230(c). Specifically, in Log #2024-0007423, CPD relieved an off-duty officer of their police powers for allegedly using the word “n--ger,” and recommended a 60-day suspension and enrollment into the Behavioral Intervention System. The CPD member had no prior complaints nor documented discipline since their appointment to the Department in 2022. Whereas, as the other investigations described below show, in OIG’s review of closed disciplinary investigations involving allegations of racial/ethnic bias verbal abuse, the respective investigative agencies had previously recommended suspensions of 30 days or less for similar allegations.

In addition, outside of Log numbers 2023-0002182, 2022-0001484, and 2022-0005382 where the CPD member did state or write the word n--ger, in many of the investigations cited below, COPA

<sup>7</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “NAACP Official Position on the Use of the Word ‘Nigger’ and the ‘N’ Word,” 2014, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://naacp.org/resources/naacp-official-position-use-word-nigger-and-n-word>.

<sup>8</sup> Ferris State University Jim Crow Museum, “Nigger and Caricature,” September 2001, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/caricature/homepage.htm>. Anti Racist Cumbria, “The N\*Word,” February 24, 2022, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://antiracistcumbria.org/the-nword/>. Equal Justice Initiative, “Segregation in America: From Slavery to Segregation,” 2018, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://segregationinamerica.eji.org/report/from-slavery-to-segregation.html>.

<sup>9</sup> The Brennan Center for Justice, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy, and Far-Right Militancy in Law Enforcement,” August 27, 2020, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “The Origins of Modern Day Policing,” accessed May 15, 2026, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/origins-modern-day-policing>.

and BIA formally documented and sustained allegations that CPD members referred to individuals as “n--ger,” when video evidence and statements from the accused make it clear that the accused used the term “n--ga.” OIG is not asserting that the investigative agency should consider semantic content with a CPD members use of the terms, “n--ger,” or “n--ga,” but rather highlighting the inconsistency in which the agencies document allegations of racial bias and verbal abuse. As with any allegation, it is important that if direct quotes are included in the final allegations and summary reports that the words accurately depict what an accused member said.

#### Log #2024-0007862

In Log #2024-0007862, it was alleged that Officer Ronald Pendleton Jr., Star #11166, used bias-based language toward a subject, detained, searched, and threatened to arrest the subject, and used excessive force without justification. Officer Pendleton and their partner, Officer Thomas Clay, Star #4363, responded to a person with a gun call and observed a subject, who they believed matched the description, in an alley near the location that the 911 caller provided. Officer Pendleton conducted a pat down of the subject and determined they did not possess any firearms. Officer Pendleton asked the subject for identification, to which the subject refused and told Officer Pendleton that they were not required to provide their identification because they had not committed a crime and were not armed. Officer Pendleton placed the subject in handcuffs and threatened to take them into a CPD station. The subject argued that they did not match the description and Officer Pendleton stated, “Whether it’s purple or not, it looks purple my [n--ga].”<sup>10</sup> When the subject refused to provide their identification again, Officer Pendleton searched their pockets as both Officers Pendleton and Clay threatened to arrest them for not providing their identification. After Officer Clay asked another CPD member on scene to request a caged squad car, the subject retrieved their identification and gave it to Officer Pendleton. Officer Clay ran the subject’s information and Officer Pendleton released the subject from the handcuffs after Officer Clay confirmed that the subject was “good.”<sup>11</sup>

During their interview with COPA, in reference to their use of the word “[n--ga],” COPA asked Officer Pendleton, “Is there any language there that you...used that could be deemed unprofessional?” Officer Pendleton told COPA that it is not unprofessional for them to use the word and that it’s a “colloquialism.” Officer Pendleton continued, “It’s identified in the dictionary as a whole different word than the word that y’all think that I used, the difference between ‘[n--ga]’ and ‘[n--ger]’. It’s two different words, two different definitions...spelled two different ways.”<sup>12</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Pendleton violated Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 when they used bias-based language, as well as searched and threatened to arrest the subject without justification.<sup>13</sup> COPA recommended a 1 to 10-day suspension and training on the Fourth Amendment and the protection of human rights.<sup>14</sup> Officer Pendleton was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

<sup>10</sup> Attachment 2 at the 5:30 to 5:38 mark.

<sup>11</sup> Attachment 2 at the 2:14 to 9:14 mark; Attachment 28.

<sup>12</sup> Attachment 18, pgs. 20 to 22.

<sup>13</sup> COPA also sustained the allegation that Officer Clay threatened to arrest the subject without justification.

<sup>14</sup> Attachment 28.

Log #2024-0007481

In Log #2024-0007481, COPA investigated allegations that Field Training Officer (FTO) Burdett Griffin III, Star #19118, engaged in an off-duty verbal altercation with restaurant employees over being overcharged for an incorrect food order. Specifically, the complainant alleged that Officer Griffin III called one employee an “asshole,” and “nappy-headed,” threatened to “choke out” another employee and the complainant, who was a customer during the incident, and called the complainant a “[n--ger].” Officer Griffin III also stated, “I hate dealing with negroes,” and threatened the complainant by stating, “How about we take this outside,” and displayed their firearm while stating to the complainant, “Try me if you want to.”<sup>15</sup>

COPA interviewed the complainant and three witnesses to the incident. The complainant told COPA that after offering words of empathy for what they have to deal with as police officers, Officer Griffin III stated to the complainant, “Yeah, I have to deal with [n--gas] like you.”<sup>16</sup> The three witnesses interviewed by COPA confirmed that Officer Griffin III stated, “I hate dealing with negroes,” and that Officer Griffin III referred to the complainant as a “negro,” during the incident.<sup>17</sup> Officer Griffin III denied all the allegations.<sup>18</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Griffin III violated Rules 2, 3, 8, and 9 when they called the employee an “asshole,” threatened to “choke out” another employee, and stated, “I hate dealing with negroes.” COPA recommended a 5 to 30-day suspension and professionalism training.<sup>19</sup> CPD Superintendent Larry Snelling concurred with COPA’s findings and recommended a 10-day suspension.<sup>20</sup> Prior to this investigation, in Log #2021-0004821, Officer Griffin III received sustained allegations for referring to a subject as, “This [n--ga].”<sup>21</sup> Officer Griffin III was not relieved of their police powers during either investigation.

Log #2024-0007423

In Log #2024-0007423, CPD relieved an off-duty officer of their police powers for calling two on-duty CPD members “goofy motherfuckers” and “racists,” and referred to one of them as “[n--ger].”<sup>22</sup> The on-duty officers were issuing a citation to Officer Marc Mack’s, Star #10398, girlfriend for evading the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) train fare. Officer Mack’s girlfriend entered the CTA platform through the emergency exit door instead of scanning their Ventra 7-day pass, which they showed to the officers. The girlfriend called Officer Mack to respond to the train station. When Officer Mack arrived, Officer Mack began calling the officers “goofies,” “goofy motherfuckers,” “racists,” and told their girlfriend to sign the citation. As Officer Mack and their girlfriend began to leave the station, one of the officers reminded Officer Mack that the interaction was being audibly and visually recorded, and Officer Mack responded, “I know and I got y’all badge numbers [n--ga], fucking racist, racist.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Attachment 44.

<sup>16</sup> Attachment 3 at the 4:28-5:00 mark.

<sup>17</sup> Attachment 8 at the 9:25-9:33 mark; Attachment 11 at the 9:40-9:50 mark; Attachment 22 at the 7:16-7:42 mark.

<sup>18</sup> Attachment 38 at the 21:51 to 23:30 mark.

<sup>19</sup> Attachment 44.

<sup>20</sup> Attachment 45.

<sup>21</sup> See Log #2021-0004821 on page 9.

<sup>22</sup> Attachments 27, 28, and 29.

<sup>23</sup> Attachment 13 at the 13:49 to 14:23 mark.

During their BIA interview, Officer Mack admitted to BIA that they used that language and apologized for their actions. BIA asked Officer Mack to explain the difference between them directing the word, “[n--ga],” toward the officer and calling them “racists,” for their actions. Officer Mack explained that as a Black man speaking to two white officers, they did not use the word n--ga, in a “racial way,” but rather it was a word they commonly use in a variety of situations, including with their friends.<sup>24</sup> BIA did not include Officer Mack’s explanation for the use of the word in its Investigative Closing Packet.<sup>25</sup>

BIA sustained allegations that off-duty Officer Mack violated Rules 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 31, and 32, including that Officer Mack referred to both officers as, “[n--ger],” and recommended a 60-day suspension as well as enrollment into the Behavioral Intervention System.<sup>26</sup> Officer Mack had no prior complaints nor disciplinary history since their appointment to CPD in 2022.<sup>27</sup> Notably, unlike with most of the other investigations with similar allegations of misconduct, Officer Mack was relieved of their police powers during BIA’s investigation into the allegations.

#### Log #2024-0003806

In Log #2024-0003806, COPA investigated allegations that Officer Thomas Clay, Star #4363, kicked and smacked a subject, and directed bias-based language and profanities at the subject.<sup>28</sup> Officer Clay was responding to a shots fired call when they observed three subjects fleeing from a car.<sup>29</sup> Body worn camera (BWC) footage shows Officer Clay pursuing one of the subjects on foot. Officer Clay conducts an emergency takedown, kicks the subject in the back, and calls the subject a “bitch ass [n--ga],” while pointing their firearm at them. Officer Clay handcuffs the subject and uses an open hand to tap the subject’s head.<sup>30</sup> Later in the incident, Officer Clay recounts their pursuit of the subject with their partner, Officer Ronald Pendleton Jr., Star #11166, and states, “Bro, that [n--ga] ... That [n--ga], when he... that [n--ga] stole on me G... I kicked his ass. You ain’t seen when I kicked that [n--ga] ... I said I’m finna beat this [n--ga] ass,” as they laughed.<sup>31</sup>

In its Final Summary Report (FSR), COPA repeatedly quoted that Officer Clay referred to the subject as a “[n--ger],” including in the allegation that Officer Pendleton failed to report Officer Clay’s use of bias-based language.<sup>32</sup> In their statement to COPA, Officer Clay identified themselves as Black, explained that n--ga is a term used by Black people, and that the term is not derogatory or racially offensive when used amongst Black people, but admitted that it was unprofessional to say.<sup>33</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations against Officer Clay, citing violations of Rules 2, 3, 8, and 9, and recommended a 30 to 89-day suspension.<sup>34</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s

<sup>24</sup> Attachment 20, at the 17:10 to 18:06 mark.

<sup>25</sup> Attachment 20 at the 15:40 to 18:07 mark; Attachment 26.

<sup>26</sup> Attachment 26.

<sup>27</sup> Attachment 17.

<sup>28</sup> Attachment 63.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Attachment 6 at the 4:42 to 5:18 mark.

<sup>31</sup> Attachment 6 at the 16:11 to mark.

<sup>32</sup> Attachment 63; COPA recommended a 1 to 29-day suspension for Officer Pendleton.

<sup>33</sup> Attachment 48 at the 7:52 to 9:12 mark.

<sup>34</sup> Attachment 63.

findings, but recommended a 15-day suspension and training for Officer Clay.<sup>35</sup> Officer Clay was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2024-0003568

In Log #2024-0003568, it was alleged that Officer Jose Fernandez, Star #12335, used a racial slur when they stated, “[N--ga] shut the fuck up,” during a traffic stop and failed to timely activate their BWC.<sup>36</sup> In-Car Camera (ICC) footage captures Officer Fernandez and their partner, Officer Rodrigo Lopez, Star #12573, on routine patrol when an individual motions their hand out the driver window. The officers activate their emergency lights, make a U-turn, and catch up to the car.<sup>37</sup> Due to Officers Fernandez and Lopez activating their BWC late, their BWC footage captures the initiation of the traffic stop and the beginning of the verbal exchange without audio. Once Officer Lopez’s BWC audio activates, the occupants of the car are yelling profanities at the officers and a voice, distinctive from the driver and front passenger’s voices, is heard saying, “[N--ga], shut the fuck up!”<sup>38</sup> At the same time this statement is said, Officer Fernandez’s mouth is moving, and both the driver and passenger look at Officer Fernandez. Officer Fernandez explains to the passenger that the interaction is being recorded on their BWC, and the passenger states, “The same way you just called us ‘[n--ga]’ is recording on your camera?” Officer Fernandez does not respond to nor deny that statement.<sup>39</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Fernandez explained that they were in a stressful situation due to the car occupants’ behavior and being in a “high crime area.” Officer Fernandez told COPA that they “wouldn’t use that language with people,” and that the car occupants were “Latino gang members.” Officer Fernandez initially denied using the racial slur then stated they did not recall using it, noting that if they did use the slur, it was “using [the occupants’] own language to communicate with them” and out of “frustration.”<sup>40</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Fernandez violated Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and CPD Directive G02-01, and recommended a 1 to 29-day suspension and training in the protection of human rights and the BWC policy.<sup>41</sup> Superintendent Snelling did not concur with the sustained finding for the allegation that Officer Fernandez stated, “[N--ga], shut the fuck up!” In CPD’s non-concurrence letter, Superintendent Snelling wrote, “COPA’s investigators are not qualified, to definitively, state that Officer Fernandez’s voice matched the voice that used the language...because the investigator is not a voice recognition expert.” Superintendent Snelling subsequently recommended a finding of Not Sustained and recommended Officer Fernandez receive a reprimand for failing to timely activate their BWC.<sup>42</sup> Officer Fernandez was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

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<sup>35</sup> Attachment 65; Superintendent Snelling did not specify what training should be recommended for Officer Clay.

<sup>36</sup> Attachment 49; OIG referred the racial slur allegation to COPA following its review of the investigation.

<sup>37</sup> Attachment 5 at the 0:42 to 0:45 mark.

<sup>38</sup> Attachment 6 at the 2:57 mark.

<sup>39</sup> Attachment 7 at the 3:27 to 3:38 mark.

<sup>40</sup> Attachment 42 at the 6:12 to 12:05 mark.

<sup>41</sup> Attachment 49.

<sup>42</sup> Attachment 52.

Log #2024-0003404

In Log #2024-0003404, a CPD lieutenant initiated a complaint against Officer Lawrence Kilgore-Wooden, Star #19664, after reviewing BWC footage of Officer Kilgore-Wooden in a patrol car using their cell phone to post a Snapchat message which reads, “Can’t fuck wit [n--gas] they all fake.”<sup>43</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Kilgore-Wooden explained that they posted a previously recorded video of themselves driving a luxury car, while off-duty, and captioned the video, “Can’t fuck wit [sic] [n--gas] they all fake,” which was a song lyric and was not sent to or directed at anyone specific. Officer Kilgore-Wooden acknowledged that they should not have used that language on duty or otherwise.<sup>44</sup>

COPA sustained the allegation that Officer Kilgore-Wooden violated Rules 2, 3, 6, and 8 by writing “Can’t fuck wit [sic] [n--gas] they all fake,” on Snapchat and recommended a 1 to 29-day suspension.<sup>45</sup> Officer Kilgore-Wooden was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

Log #2024-0002283

In Log #2024-0002283, off-duty Officer Jose Rodriguez, Star #5512, was involved in a domestic incident with their then-girlfriend, who was also a CPD member. It was alleged that Officer Rodriguez called their girlfriend “a fucking faggot,” and “n--ga,” threatened them by stating, “If I’m going down, you’re going down with me,” kicked in and punched the front door of their girlfriend’s home, entered the home without permission, refused to leave the home after being asked to, damaged multiple items in the home, and was intoxicated.<sup>46</sup> During the incident, doorbell video footage shows Officer Rodriguez knocking on and punching the front door as their girlfriend speaks to Officer Rodriguez through a doorbell intercom system. Officer Rodriguez attempts to kick in the door while stating, “You’re a fucking faggot...[N--ga], I’m hot, I’m cold, open the fucking door...you’re a fucking faggot, dude.” Officer Rodriguez eventually kicks in the door and enters the home.<sup>47</sup> Officer Rodriguez damaged several items in their girlfriend’s home then left with their brother once they saw a CPD car driving toward the home.<sup>48</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Rodriguez didn’t recall using the term n--ga, or any other bias-based language, and explained that they don’t “talk like that,” and they “don’t know where [the allegation] came from.”<sup>49</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Rodriguez, violated Rules 2, 3, 8, and 9, and recommended a 30 to 89-day suspension.<sup>50</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s sustained findings against Officer Rodriguez but noted that “due to the seriousness of the

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<sup>43</sup> Attachment 14; Attachment 3 at the 0:00 to 0:17 mark.

<sup>44</sup> Attachment 7 at the 5:57 to 9:33 mark; Attachment 8.

<sup>45</sup> Attachment 14.

<sup>46</sup> Attachment 114.

<sup>47</sup> Attachment 17 at the 0:55 to 1:14 mark.

<sup>48</sup> Attachment 114; The responding CPD members briefly interacted with Officer Rodriguez, asked Officer Rodriguez if they were okay then Officer Rodriguez left the scene.

<sup>49</sup> Attachment 103 at the 35:25 to 36:15 mark.

<sup>50</sup> Attachment 114.

misconduct,” the Department recommended separation.<sup>51</sup> Officer Rodriguez was relieved of their police powers during the investigation.<sup>52</sup>

#### Log #2023-0003651

In Log #2023-0003651, Officer Brandon McDonald, Star #19423, was accused of directing profanities toward their neighbor and referring to them as, “[n--ger],” on the neighbor’s Ring doorbell camera while off-duty.<sup>53</sup> Officer McDonald’s neighbor told COPA that Officer McDonald never spoke to them directly, but that they watched them use profane language and the term, “[n--ga],” from a recorded surveillance camera.<sup>54</sup> The neighbor further related that due to a family member’s experience being called “[n--ger],” they were raised to be fearful of people who use the word, and they did not appreciate another Black person using the term.<sup>55</sup>

COPA repeatedly quoted that Officer McDonald referred to his neighbor as a “[n--ger],” and wrote it as such in the allegation. In their statement to COPA, Officer McDonald clarified that while using the word was in poor taste, they did not intend to use it in a derogatory manner and explained that the word is commonly used amongst Black communities to refer to one another.<sup>56</sup>

COPA sustained both allegations against Officer McDonald, citing violations of Rules 2, 6, 8, and 9, and recommended a 5-day suspension. Officer McDonald was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2023-0002433

In Log #2023-0002433, Officer Jamaul Jenkins, Star #8917, responded to an attempted suicide call and engaged in an altercation with several individuals on scene.<sup>57</sup> Video footage shows Officer Jenkins forcefully pushing a handcuffed individual into a wall and calling them a “hoe,” and telling another individual, “Yeah, that’s all you can hit bitch...bitch ass [n--ga].”<sup>58</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Jenkins related that they said, “bitch ass [n--ga],” to themselves when no one was around “out of duress,” and that it was not directed at anyone.<sup>59</sup>

COPA sustained three use of profanity allegations and one excessive force allegation against Officer Jenkins citing violations of Rules 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10. COPA recommended a Violation Noted and sensitivity training.<sup>60</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s sustained findings and the recommended penalty for Officer Jenkins.<sup>61</sup> Officer Jenkins was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

<sup>51</sup> Attachment 117.

<sup>52</sup> Attachment 101.

<sup>53</sup> CPD member Brandon McDonald was promoted to sergeant effective November 1, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Attachment 4 at the 0:01 to 1:04 mark.

<sup>55</sup> Attachment 8 at the 19:57 to 20:44 mark.

<sup>56</sup> Attachment 13 at the 24:48 to 26:26 mark.

<sup>57</sup> Attachment 60.

<sup>58</sup> Attachment 30 at the 12:20 to 13:08 mark.

<sup>59</sup> Attachment 36 at the 17:16 to 20:00 mark.

<sup>60</sup> Attachment 60.

<sup>61</sup> Attachment 65.

Log #2023-0002182

In Log #2023-0002182, a CPD Tactical Review and Evaluation Division (TRED) lieutenant initiated a complaint against Officer Alec Freeman, Star #3945, after reviewing video of Officer Freeman pursuing a subject on foot and stating, “I’ll fucking shoot you [n--ger], get on the fucking ground.”<sup>62</sup>

After repeated playbacks of their BWC footage, Officer Freeman denied using the word, “[n--ger],” and instead told COPA that they called the subject, “dumb,” or “dumbass,” that they “would never say that word,” and “the allegation is ridiculous.”<sup>63</sup> When asked if “calling a Black person ‘[n--ger],’ is a racial slur,” Officer Freeman responded that “people have different standpoints on it,” and that it can be.<sup>64</sup> COPA found that Officer Freeman’s explanation that they used the word “dumb” or “dumbass,” was not credible but could not “conclude that Officer Freeman was being deliberately untruthful.”<sup>65</sup>

COPA found that Officer Freeman violated Rules 2, 3, 6, and 8. COPA recommended a 30-day suspension and Superintendent Snelling concurred, adding that Officer Freeman receive Biased-Based Policing and Diversity and Community Relations training.<sup>66</sup> Officer Freeman was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

Log #2023-0000129

In Log #2023-0000129, it was alleged that Officer Jeffery Morrow, Star #17957, used a racially, bias-based slur and profanity by referring to an arrestee as, “[n--ger],” and telling the arrestee, “Oh well, you’re fucked.”<sup>67</sup> BWC video captures Officer Morrow, after a foot pursuit of the arrestee, speaking with another CPD member and stating, “I lost my Air Pods chasing after this [n--ga].”<sup>68</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Morrow admitted to referring to the arrestee as a “n--ga.” However, COPA repeatedly wrote that Officer Morrow said, “[n--ger].” In Officer Morrow’s interview with COPA, Officer Morrow stated that they regularly use that language. Officer Morrow stated to COPA, “if I’m not around a civilian,” and that in “[their] community, [n--ga], is a term of endearment,” it has “no negative connotation behind it,” and “[they] know what it means to the people in their culture.”<sup>69</sup> In its FSR, COPA states, “while COPA appreciates that as a Black male, Officer Morrow’s understanding [of] the use of the word “[n--ga]” is informed by [their] particular culture and community, COPA finds it is also necessary for Officer Morrow to be sensitive of the use of that word in the greater Chicago community, where it is universally understood to be extremely racially offensive.”<sup>70</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Morrow violated Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 10, and recommended a 10-day suspension. Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s

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<sup>62</sup> Attachment 5 at 3:47.

<sup>63</sup> Attachment 20 at the 29:22 to 32:00 mark, the 32:50 to 33:57 mark, and the 34:37 to 35:58 mark, respectively.

<sup>64</sup> Attachment 20 at the 38:30 to 38:51 mark.

<sup>65</sup> Attachment 27.

<sup>66</sup> Attachments 27 and 28.

<sup>67</sup> Attachment 26.

<sup>68</sup> Attachment 10 at 5:23.

<sup>69</sup> Attachment 20 at the 14:00 to 14:51 mark.

<sup>70</sup> Attachment 26.

recommended findings and discipline.<sup>71</sup> Officer Morrow was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2022-0005382

In Log #2022-0005382, Officer Christyana Zapata, Star #18345, was accused of sending text messages containing racial slurs and being in a romantic relationship with a convicted felon. Officer Zapata's ex-boyfriend provided COPA with screenshots of text messages and one of the messages states, "Fucking [n--gers] just robbed more [people]...Now I'm staying looking for these people."<sup>72</sup>

In Officer Zapata's statement to COPA, Officer Zapata admitted to sending the messages, Officer Zapata asked the investigator if they could "say it," then Officer Zapata stated that they intended to type the word, "[n--gaz]," not n--gers, but because they were "typing so fast...another word came out."<sup>73</sup> Officer Zapata told COPA that they would never use the word, "it is completely out of character for [Officer Zapata], [Officer Zapata] knows how offensive it is, their partner is Afro-Latina... [and Officer Zapata] knows how much weight that word carries."<sup>74</sup> Officer Zapata further related that the term "[n--gaz]," is a "slang word," that Officer Zapata and their friends commonly used growing up around a "mix of Hispanics and Blacks" and hears it daily in music. When asked if they admitted to the allegation, Officer Zapata stated, "No. I sent a text message that came out with another word due to misspelling."<sup>75</sup>

COPA sustained Rules 2, 6, and 8 violations, and recommended up to a 180-day suspension and Implicit Bias and Racial Sensitivity training for the sustained allegation that Officer Zapata used a "racial slur."<sup>76</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA's recommendations and imposed a 10-day suspension.<sup>77</sup> Officer Zapata was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2022-0005047

In Log #2022-0005047, it was alleged that Officer David Regalado, Star #11590, called a bystander during an arrest "[n--ger]," directed several profanities toward the bystander, grabbed an arrestee by their neck, and failed to activate their BWC. During the incident, Officer Regalado believed that the bystander was attempting to interfere with the arrest and told the bystander, "Go [n--ga]," to which the bystander responded, "You gon' call me a [n--ga], [are] you Black?" Officer Regalado says "[n--ga]" again then states, "I didn't call you anything, my camera is on, get the fuck back man," as Officer Regalado pushes the bystander. Officer Regalado repeatedly denies calling the bystander a n--ga.<sup>78</sup>

In their statement to COPA, Officer Regalado admitted to the allegations but said that the bystander used the word, "[n--ga]," first and Officer Regalado intended to use "[n--ga]" as a "slang term," and not "toward a race or [their] ethnicity." Officer Regalado stated that [the bystander] alleged that

<sup>71</sup> Attachments 26 and 28.

<sup>72</sup> Attachment 2.

<sup>73</sup> Attachment 18 at the 11:45 to 12:19 mark.

<sup>74</sup> Attachment 18 at the 12:29 to 12:43 mark.

<sup>75</sup> Attachment 18 at the 12:46 to 13:58 mark and at the 27:45 to 28:47, respectively.

<sup>76</sup> Attachment 24.

<sup>77</sup> Attachment 25.

<sup>78</sup> Attachment 21 at the 2:14 to 2:44 mark.

[Officer Regalado] was calling [the bystander] “a [n--ger], which in [their] mind is towards race and ethnicity but that was never [their] intent.”<sup>79</sup>

COPA sustained all allegations against Officer Regalado, citing violations of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9, and recommended a 25-day suspension.<sup>80</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s findings and recommendation.<sup>81</sup> Officer Regalado was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2022-0001532

In Log #2022-0001532, ICC footage captures Officer John Kaporis, Star #18741, using several racial and other bias-based slurs while on duty, working by themselves in their patrol car. For 25 minutes, Officer Kaporis is driving and heard stating, “Come on faggot,” “Fucking [n--ger],” and “What the fuck is your problem, [n--ger] ...stupid [n--ger].”<sup>82</sup> Officer Kaporis is presumably directing the slurs toward other motorists and/or pedestrians, though ICC footage does not show whether Officer Kaporis’ windows are down.

Later in the footage, Officer Kaporis is assigned to a traffic crash. After arriving at the scene, Officer Kaporis was unable to locate the parties involved. Officer Kaporis briefly communicated with an OEMC dispatcher via radio, who COPA determined was Black, and referred to the dispatcher as a “stupid ass [n--ger].”<sup>83</sup>

During Officer Kaporis’ statement to COPA, Officer Kaporis explained that they said, “Come on faggot,” because they were “frustrated” with the car in front of them, and “venting,” but asserted that the word, “faggot” can “mean many things to different people.”<sup>84</sup> Officer Kaporis would not acknowledge that it is an offensive slur. When asked to explain the repeated use of the term, “[n--ger],” Officer Kaporis stated that slur “can have many meanings to [Officer Kaporis], depending on why [Officer Kaporis] said it and how [Officer Kaporis] said it.”<sup>85</sup> After several breaks with their attorney, Officer Kaporis told COPA that n--ger is a derogatory term that should never be used, and that they probably said it out of frustration but that it is not a word they have ever used prior to the ICC incident. Officer Kaporis told COPA that the words faggot and n--ger are both derogatory and should not be used because someone might hear it and not know the context of why it was said. After another break with their attorney, Officer Kaporis told COPA they would not have used the slurs if they knew the ICC was on because they would be subjected to “scrutiny,” and “legal consequences.”<sup>86</sup> Officer Kaporis took one last break with their attorney and returned to the interview to clarify that using the slurs was wrong, whether cameras are recording them or not.

Officer Kaporis was relieved of their police powers during the investigation and COPA requested Officer Kaporis submit to a Fitness for Duty evaluation as well as enrollment into the Behavioral Intervention System.<sup>87</sup> COPA sustained the allegations against Officer Kaporis, citing Rules 2 and 6,

<sup>79</sup> Attachment 32 at the 21:36 to 24:00 mark.

<sup>80</sup> Attachment 69.

<sup>81</sup> Attachment 71.

<sup>82</sup> Attachment 10 at the 7:06, 7:52, 8:12 and 8:15 marks.

<sup>83</sup> Attachment 11 at the 4:07 mark.

<sup>84</sup> Attachment 23 at the 5:00 to 6:15 mark.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid at the 8:06 to 8:35 mark.

<sup>86</sup> Attachment 23 at the 22:30 to 22:46 mark.

<sup>87</sup> Attachments 31 and 20.

and recommended separation. Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA's findings and discipline recommendation.<sup>88</sup> Officer Kaporis had an extensive disciplinary history where they were listed as the accused in 50 investigations since their appointment with the Department in 1995—several of the complaints involved verbal abuse against the public and conduct unbecoming.<sup>89</sup> In Log #2022-0001652, Officer Kaporis received sustained allegations for referring to Black women as “Shines,” and “F1s,” and was later found to have violated Rule 14 for making false reports.<sup>90</sup>

#### Log #2022-0001484

In Log #2022-0001484, BWC footage captures Officer Richard Pina, Star #19674, in their patrol car smoking a cigarette while speaking with a Black person, who was upset that they were not allowed in a bar. Officer Pina yells at the individual and tells them that the bar was not letting them inside due to a “problem earlier” with the individual.<sup>91</sup> Officer Pina then drives away and places a phone call to the bar’s doorman. Officer Pina screams at the doorman via phone, “Fucking lock that goddamn door. Don’t even have Jeff talk to him. You hear me? Do you hear me? Ron? Ron? Don’t even fucking open that door. Tell Jeff to stop talking to these fucking [n--gers]. Tell Jeff to fucking stop talking to ‘em. The fuck,” and ended the call.<sup>92</sup>

During their COPA interview, Officer Pina admitted to saying, “[n--gers],” and COPA asked Officer Pina, “And what did you mean by that?” Officer Pina replied, “I don’t use that word, uh, I was probably a little heated, frustrated. I’m from the South Side of Chicago. That’s common Chicago vernacular. I’ve been called that word before and uh, yeah. I just let it slip out. I wasn’t directing it at anybody...I was aggravated and it slipped out.” Officer Pina admitted that they are aware the word “n--ger” is “racist language,” and that they “specifically avoid using that word,” but they “must have been heated that day for some reason.” COPA asked Officer Pina, “While on duty have you used the word ‘[n--gers]’ before?” Officer Pina responded, “No, no. Well, I can’t remember. I can’t remember using it. Like I said, I don’t, I mean, but might’ve it slipped out before? In 26 years on the job, might’ve.” When asked if they use that language off duty, Officer Pina replied, “I don’t use that language, I try not to use that language.”<sup>93</sup>

COPA sustained the allegations that Officer Pina used racist language by stating “[n--gers],” smoked a cigarette while in uniform and in contact with the public, and failed to timely activate their BWC, in violation of Rules 2, 3, 6, and 55.<sup>94</sup> COPA recommended a 30 to 180-day suspension as well as Implicit Bias and Racial Sensitivity Training.<sup>95</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s findings and recommended a 180-day suspension as well as Implicit Bias, Racial Sensitivity, and Bias-Based Policing training.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Attachments 28 and 30.

<sup>89</sup> OIG Public Safety Dashboard, <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/data-dashboards/complaints-notifications-lookup/>.

<sup>90</sup> See Log #2022-0001652; The racial slur “Shine,” is a highly offensive term used to describe a Black person who either shines shoes to make a living or whose skin is “dark enough to shine.” “F1s” are “Female Blacks,” which CPD uses to identify Black women on various department reports and via radio.

<sup>91</sup> Due to Officer Pina’s late BWC activation, their BWC only captured a portion of the interaction between Officer Pina and the individual with audio.

<sup>92</sup> Attachment 4 at the 2:00 to 3:39 mark.

<sup>93</sup> Attachment 11 at the 17:57 to 22:51 mark.

<sup>94</sup> Rule 55 prohibits CPD members from smoking cigarettes while in uniform and in official contact with the public.

<sup>95</sup> Attachment 18.

<sup>96</sup> Attachment 19.

Officer Pina filed a grievance, and an arbitrator rescinded the suspension and ordered the suspension be expunged from Officer Pina's employment file and disciplinary history. The arbitrator determined that Officer Pina did not receive due process because of delays in the investigative process, specifically 15 months where COPA did not conduct any investigation into the incident without reason. In their decision, the arbitrator did not address Officer Pina's use of a racial slur or consider the seriousness of Officer Pina's use of the word as a police officer immediately after interacting with a Black individual, but instead highlighted several instances where CPD members referred to members of the public as "[n--gers]," where the range of discipline was between a reprimand and a 45-day suspension.<sup>97</sup> Officer Pina was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2022-0000737

In Log #2022-0000737, Officer Ryan Edwards, Star #19672, was accused of calling a subject a "[n--ger]," during a traffic stop. Officer Edwards and their partners engaged in a verbal altercation with the subject, who questioned the reason for the stop and informed them of their previous interactions with CPD. Throughout the interaction, Officer Edwards told the subject they were "dumb as hell," "wack as fuck," and called them a "corn ball." Officer Edwards then told the subject, "[N--ga], we don't care about this shit." The subject immediately responded, "Oh, you calling me a [n--ga]? That's going to COPA...I get called [n--gas] when I get pulled over."<sup>98</sup>

During their statement to COPA, Officer Edwards related that they did not recall referring to the subject as a n--ga. However, after reviewing BWC video, Officer Edwards stated that the audio is "...muffled at best, I'm not sure what to make of it." A COPA Investigator asked Officer Edwards whether "It is possible though that you used the N-word due to [the subject's] reaction to what [the subject] believes you using it, correct?" Officer Edwards replied, "Due to [the subject's] reaction, correct...it is a possibility." Officer Edwards told COPA that if they did call the subject a n--ga there was no malicious intent behind it.<sup>99</sup>

COPA sustained the allegation that Officer Edwards directed "[N--ger], we don't care about this shit," to the subject, in violation of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9, and recommended a reprimand.<sup>100</sup> Officer Edwards was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

#### Log #2021-0004821

In Log #2021-0004821, it was alleged that Officer Burdett Griffin III, Star #19118, referred to a subject as, "this [n--ga]," failed to report excessive force against the subject by their partner, failed to assist their partner in securing the subject into police custody, engaged in an unnecessary verbal altercation with the subject, threatened to hospitalize the subject, and prematurely deactivated their BWC.<sup>101</sup> As Officer Griffin III and their partner were attempting to remove the subject from a convenience store, a physical struggle ensued when the officers believed the subject was going to spit on them. As Officer Griffin III's partner struggled with the subject, Officer Griffin III stated,

<sup>97</sup> Attachment 22; The incident occurred on April 11, 2022, and Superintendent Review concluded in January of 2024.

<sup>98</sup> Attachment 7 at 8:36 to 9:06 and at 11:19 to 11:50.

<sup>99</sup> Attachment 8 at the 9:09 to 11:45 mark.

<sup>100</sup> Attachment 25.

<sup>101</sup> Attachment 41.

“Motherfucker, you gonna go to jail,” and “man, put this [n--ga] in jail.”<sup>102</sup> Later in the incident, on BWC at the 7:01 mark, Officer Griffin III told a store employee, “Sign these complaints, we gonna lock this [n--ga] up,” in reference to the subject.<sup>103</sup>

During COPA’s interview with Officer Griffin III, they told COPA that while they could not clearly hear themselves on BWC video call the subject a n--ga, they may have done so, but that it was not meant in a derogatory way, rather it was “street language.” Officer Griffin III further related that using the term n--ga, is not appropriate as a CPD member if it is used in a derogatory manner, but that “it has become such street jargon,” and that they said it in the “heat of the moment.”<sup>104</sup>

COPA sustained all six allegations against Officer Griffin III, citing violations of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 for using the word “[n--ga],” and recommended that Officer Griffin receive a 5 to 15-day suspension.<sup>105</sup> Superintendent Snelling did not concur with all of COPA’s findings and recommended a 7-day suspension.<sup>106</sup> Officer Griffin III was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.<sup>107</sup>

#### Log #2021-0004659

In Log #2021-0004659, off-duty Officer Erick Cortez, Star #18158, was accused of using the term n--ga and other profanities while interacting with a subject. Officer Cortez’s personal vehicle was struck by the subject’s vehicle before the subject fled the scene and continued to strike several other vehicles. Officer Cortez called 911 and followed the subject until on-duty CPD members responded. Officer Cortez and the subject exchanged words and Officer Cortez stated, “Don’t hit and run on me [n--ga] ...get the fuck out with that shit [n--ga] ...” and “Don’t bullshit me bro, you fucked up, you fucked with the wrong dude bro.”<sup>108</sup>

During Officer Cortez’s statement to COPA, Officer Cortez stated that they are “Latino,” and believed the subject was Latino as well, and that they were not using the term n--ga in a derogatory manner but instead were merely “mocking” the subject because the subject called them n--ga first and Officer Cortez was “frustrated.”<sup>109</sup>

COPA found that Officer Cortez violated Rules 2, 8, and 9, and recommended a 30 to 60-day suspension and racial sensitivity training.<sup>110</sup> Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA, recommending a 60-day suspension and additional training on implicit bias and racial sensitivity and bias-based policing.<sup>111</sup> Officer Cortez was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

<sup>102</sup> Attachment 8 at 2:00.

<sup>103</sup> Attachment 8.

<sup>104</sup> Attachment 29 at the 17:28 to 21:53 mark.

<sup>105</sup> Attachment 41.

<sup>106</sup> Attachment 43.

<sup>107</sup> Officer Griffin III was promoted to FTO effective November 1, 2023.

<sup>108</sup> Attachment 5 at the 2:17 to 2:46 mark.

<sup>109</sup> Attachment 20 at the 7:08 to 7:50 mark and at 8:17 to 12:00.

<sup>110</sup> Attachment 22.

<sup>111</sup> Attachment 23.

Log #2021-0001133

In Log #2021-0001133, it was alleged that Officer Dexter Calhoun, Star #17364, failed to activate their BWC, struck an arrestee without justification, engaged in an unnecessary verbal altercation with the arrestee and other civilians, and used bias-based racial language in stating to the arrestee, “Your stupid ass. [N--ger], hold your feet up.”<sup>112</sup> According to COPA’s FSR, Officer Calhoun and other CPD members conducted a traffic stop due to the arrestee, who was a vehicle passenger, failing to wear a seatbelt. The arrestee exited the vehicle, fled on foot, and Officer Calhoun pursued them. Officer Calhoun observed a firearm fall out of the arrestee’s coat pocket and recovered it.<sup>113</sup> As observed during BWC footage, Officer Calhoun is searching the handcuffed arrestee’s pants and states, “Yo’ stupid ass. Hold your feet up. [N--ga], hold your feet up.”<sup>114</sup>

In Officer Calhoun’s statement to COPA, Officer Calhoun admitted that referring to the arrestee as n--ga was “inappropriate” and that it was said in the “heat of the moment.”<sup>115</sup>

COPA sustained three of the four allegations against Officer Calhoun, citing violations of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9 for using “biased-based and racial language” and recommended a 10-day suspension.<sup>116</sup> COPA not sustained the allegation of unnecessary physical contact. Superintendent Snelling concurred with COPA’s findings, but not the discipline and recommended a 5-day suspension and retraining on the BWC policy and professionalism, which COPA later agreed with.<sup>117</sup> Officer Calhoun was not relieved of their police powers during the investigation.

**Disparities in Disciplinary Outcomes**

Based on OIG’s review of closed misconduct investigations involving allegations of CPD members using racial slurs, OIG has identified disparities in BIA’s and COPA’s disciplinary recommendations. It is imperative that CPD members receive consistent and fair discipline for similar allegations and that the investigative agency memorializes aggravating and mitigating considerations in the final summary reports. In the above misconduct investigations, many of the accused CPD members received recommended suspensions for less than 30 days with inconsistent recommendations for training or consideration for entry into the Behavioral Intervention System. Also, outside of Officer Mack, only two of the CPD members, Officers John Kaporis and Jose Rodriguez, were relieved of their police powers during their investigations, where Officers Kaporis and Rodriguez both received recommended discipline of separation.<sup>118</sup> In contrast to the other investigations with alleged misconduct that included bias-based verbal abuse, in Log #2024-0007423, Officer Mack was relieved of their police powers throughout the entire investigation and received a recommended 60-day suspension and enrollment into the Behavioral Intervention System despite having no past sustained disciplinary history. For example, in Log #2023-0002182, Officer Freeman, who stated, “I’ll fucking shoot you [n--ger], get on the fucking ground” was not relieved of their police powers and was recommended a suspension of only 30 days.<sup>119</sup> Accordingly, it was unclear whether BIA considered Officer Mack’s disciplinary history, or lack thereof, when considering the appropriate

<sup>112</sup> Attachment 32.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Attachment 15 at the 3:20 to 3:25 mark.

<sup>115</sup> Attachment 26 at 15:15; Attachment 27 at the 0:20 to 2:20 mark.

<sup>116</sup> Attachment 32.

<sup>117</sup> Attachment 34; 35.

<sup>118</sup> Officer Kaporis faced separation charges prior to their retirement in January 2025.

<sup>119</sup> Attachment 5 at 3:47.

discipline, or whether BIA and COPA will consider increasing suspension recommendations above 30 days and recommend Behavioral Intervention for others accused of using racial slurs in the future.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, in these investigations, the investigative agency routinely serves and sustains allegations against CPD members, which contain inaccurate information and/or misspelled terms written as direct quotes from the accused.

In 2022, OIG found that BIA, COPA, and the Police Board lack sufficient guidance to ensure procedural fairness and consistency of discipline recommendations across misconduct investigations.<sup>121</sup> Specifically, OIG determined that BIA and COPA's "policies do not provide sufficient guidance on how, when, and in what measure those agencies should consider aggravating and mitigating factors in reaching disciplinary recommendations, risking approaches that vary widely across investigations and may therefore be inconsistent and unfair."<sup>122</sup>

In 2025, OIG conducted a follow-up to its 2022 evaluation, which assessed the corrective actions taken by BIA, COPA, and the Police Board in response to its recommendations.<sup>123</sup> Previously, OIG had recommended that BIA and COPA revise their policies to require the documentation of aggravating and mitigating factors in final reports and how those factors influenced the disciplinary recommendation.<sup>124</sup> In response to this recommendation, CPD updated its related policies and trainings to require that aggravating and mitigating factors be documented and considered in disciplinary recommendations.<sup>125</sup> COPA has partially implemented OIG's recommendation by updating its FSR templates to include "a discussion on mitigating or aggravating factors considered," however, COPA's current FSR-related policy does not mandate consideration of these factors.<sup>126</sup> COPA is currently revising its policy, which will require its investigators to "include in the FSR 'the total number of aggravating and mitigating factors and how those factors were used to arrive at a disciplinary recommendation.'"<sup>127</sup>

Lastly, COPA and BIA should ensure that final investigative summary reports are complete and accurate. In Log #2024-0007423, despite BIA questioning Officer Mack's use of the term, "[n--ga]," and Officer Mack explaining their use of the term, BIA omitted that information in its Investigative Closing Packet. In most investigations as described above, CPD members accused of

<sup>120</sup> In Log #2015-1077812, a CPD member reported that Sergeant Jack Axiom, Star #966, stated, "Oh yeah, some [n--ger] is coming to town," in reference to then-President Barack Obama. COPA's predecessor, the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA), sustained the allegation against Sergeant Axiom and recommended separation. Then-Superintendent Eddie Johnson did not concur with IPRA's disciplinary recommendation and believed a 270-day suspension was "more applicable," due to Sergeant Axiom not having prior disciplinary history, being forthcoming during the investigation, and apologizing to the Black officer who was offended by their use of the word. Sergeant Axiom resigned while under investigation on March 15, 2019.

<sup>121</sup> City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, "Fairness and Consistency in the Disciplinary Process for Chicago Police Department Members," June 6, 2022, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Fairness-and-Consistency-in-the-Disciplinary-Process-for-Chicago-Police-Department-Members.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, "Follow-up to OIG's Evaluation of Fairness and Consistency in the Disciplinary Process for CPD Members," August 29, 2025, accessed May 15, 2026, <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Fairness-and-Consistency-in-Disciplinary-Process-for-CPD-Members-Follow-up.pdf>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

misconduct are required to provide statements to the investigative agency as part of the investigative process. To ensure an investigation is consistent and fair, a CPD member's acceptance of responsibility and explanations of misconduct should be included in the final report and taken into consideration when recommending discipline.

Inconsistencies in investigations and analyses can lead to disproportionate discipline and/or a lack of accountability for CPD members. Although BIA and COPA are responsible for considering the unique facts of each investigation, there must be consistent and fair procedures in place to ensure that CPD members are disciplined appropriately for similar allegations of misconduct, when taking their prior disciplinary history into consideration.

### **Recommendations**

To inform and improve future investigations, OIG recommends the following:

1. Determine whether additional training is necessary for CPD members to address the prohibition of the use of racial slurs while on or off-duty and to improve cultural competency.
2. Ensure consistency and fairness in disciplinary recommendations for sustained findings involving the use of racial slurs by considering all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history.
3. Ensure allegations served to accused CPD members are accurate and consistent, including the proper spelling of all quoted words that the accused is alleged to have stated.

Please provide written responses to these recommendations by July 17, 2026. You may contact Chief Investigative Analyst LaDonna Candia-Flanagan at [lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org](mailto:lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org) or (773) 478-5614 with any questions. OIG looks forward to your agency's response, which will be published in accordance with MCC § 2-56-250.

Respectfully,



Tobara Richardson  
Interim Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General

cc: Samuel Chae, Associate General Counsel for Public Safety, OIG  
LaDonna Candia-Flanagan, Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety, OIG  
Deputy Chief Traci Walker, BIA, CPD  
Scott Spears, General Counsel, CPD  
Angela Snell, Acting General Counsel, COPA

# Appendix B | COPA Response



July 17, 2026

Tobara Richardson  
Deputy Inspector General  
for Public Safety  
Office of Inspector General  
740 North Sedgwick Street, Suite 200  
Chicago, Illinois 60654

## *Via Electronic Mail*

Re: Recommendation to Inform and Improve Future Investigations Regarding Allegations of Using Racial Slurs

Dear Deputy Inspector Richardson:

Thank you for your recommendations to inform and improve future investigations regarding allegations of using racial slurs. COPA responds to PSIG's recommendations as follows:

1. Determine whether additional training is necessary for CPD members to address the prohibition of the use of racial slurs while on or off-duty and to improve cultural competency.
  - a. COPA Response: Agree.
2. Ensure consistency and fairness in disciplinary recommendations for sustained findings involving the use of racial slurs by considering all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history.
  - a. COPA Response: Agree. COPA already considers an officer's prior disciplinary history in the normal course. And, as you may know, COPA has been working on internal guidance to improve its disciplinary recommendations, which seeks to include a standardized list of aggravating and mitigating factors.
3. Ensure allegations served to accused CPD members are accurate and consistent, including the proper spelling of all quoted words that the accused is alleged to have stated.
  - a. COPA Response: Agree. COPA will endeavor to use quoted words where possible. In some instances, COPA may not know the exact words by the time allegations must be served. COPA must balance its need to serve allegations prior to a full investigation into the case against the officer's right to adequate notice of the allegations against them.

As always, COPA appreciates PSIG's continued diligent review of COPA's investigations. Please let me know of any questions.

*[Remainder of page left intentionally blank]*

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LaKenya White', with a stylized flourish at the end.

LaKenya White  
Chief Administrator  
Civilian Office of Police Accountability

# Appendix C | BIA Response



**Brandon Johnson**  
Mayor

**Department of Police · City of Chicago**  
3510 S. Michigan Avenue · Chicago, Illinois 60653

**Fred L. Waller**  
Interim Superintendent of Police

August 17, 2026

## **VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Ms. Tobar Richardson (TRichardson@igchicago.org)  
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety  
City of Chicago Office of Inspector General  
231 South LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

**Re: Recommendation to Inform and Improve Future Investigations Regarding Allegations of Using Racial Slurs**

Dear Deputy Inspector General Richardson:

Thank you for providing your recommended measures to inform and improve future disciplinary investigations involving allegations of racial slurs conducted by the Chicago Police Department's Bureau of Internal Affairs. As set out in General Order G03-02, the Department's highest priority is the sanctity of human life, which is ground in the belief that all human beings are to be perceived and treated as persons of inherent worth and dignity, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military status, immigration status, housing status, source of income, credit history, or incarceration status.

General Order G02-01, Protection of Human Rights, recognizes Chicago's variety of communities, each with their own distinctive cultures, lifestyles, customs and challenges. It reconfirms CPD's commitment to working with these communities to serve and protect, safeguard lives and property, guarantee all persons fair and equal treatment under the law, and ensure that all persons may enjoy their fundamental rights as human beings. G02-01 establishes CPD's policy commitment to observing, upholding, and enforcing all laws relating to individual human rights.

CPD's emphasis on the sanctity of human life is further bolstered by the recently-updated General Order G02-04, Prohibitions Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias-Based Policing. This policy expressly prohibits racial profiling or other bias-based policing. Both G02-01 and G02-04 require that all Department members, sworn and non-sworn, interact with members of the public in an unbiased, fair, and respectful manner, treat all persons with courtesy and dignity that is inherently due every person as a human being, and to act, speak, and conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful, and professional manner. The Department trains on these directives through the basic recruit training curriculum, annual in-service training, remedial training when appropriate, and roll call training.

The Department enforces G02-04 consistently with General Order G08-01, Complaint and Disciplinary System. Any allegations of misconduct or violations of G02-04 will be reported, initiated, and investigated. Department members have an individual duty to report allegations of misconduct and will immediately report any observed violations of the policies and procedures established in G02-04, including any discrimination or other bias-based

policing, to a Department supervisor consistent with General Order G08-01-02, Complaint Initiation and Log Number Investigation Assignment. Discipline up to and including separation from the Department may be administered for any misconduct or violation of policy.

CPD offers the following responses to the specific recommendations:

**1. Determine whether additional training is necessary for CPD members to address the prohibition of the use of racial slurs while on or off-duty and to improve cultural competency.**

CPD agrees with this recommendation, and confirms that under existing policy this determination takes place annually. As provided in Special Order S02-08, Community Engagement in Policy and Training Development, CPD recognizes that cultural and societal norms are constantly evolving, and, as such, Department policies and trainings may need to be reviewed and adjusted for consistency with those norms. The Department values the City's diversity and is committed to fairly and respectfully engaging with all residents, and particularly with respect to this recommendation, race. Special Order S11-10, Department Training, particularly speaks to impartial policing, which is the practice of policing fairly, with courtesy and dignity, and without bias to promote broad community engagement, foster public confidence in the Department, and build partnerships between law enforcement and members of the community that support the effective delivery of police services. To that end, S11-10 requires that all training courses that the Department conduct include, at a minimum, guiding principles of procedural justice, de-escalation, impartial policing, and community policing.

In addition to the training mandate in General Order G02-04, Prohibitions Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias-Based Policing, CPD identifies and tailors its annual Training Plan based on a Needs Assessment Report. The Needs Assessment Report identifies data collection and analysis pertaining to use of force reviews, discipline and civilian complaints, officer safety issues, input from Department members, collective bargaining units, and members of the community; recommendations from the Department's oversight entities; research of law enforcement best practices and changes in law, Department policy, Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board requirements, and evaluations of training courses, instructors, and field training officers. Recommendations from the OIG, including this recommendation, are taken into consideration as part of the Needs Assessment Report.

Special Order S11-10-03, In-Service Training, requires that members receive, at minimum, annual training on topics including de-escalation, response to resistance, and use of force; community policing; and impartial policing. Every two years, Department members receive training on methods, strategies, and techniques for recognizing and responding to hate crimes, including procedures for handling complaints and reports. Every three years Department members receive training that includes procedural justice, civil and human rights, and cultural competency. Mandatory annual Department in-service training must also emphasize the importance of impartial policing by including training on topics such as anti-bias and impartial policing, cultural competency to prepare members to interact effectively with people from diverse communities including, a non-exclusive list of which includes people of color, LGBTQ individuals, religious minorities, and immigrants. This training specifically includes training on General Order G02-04, Prohibition Regarding Racial Profiling and Other Bias Based Policing, and General Order G02-01, Protection of Human Rights.

In accordance with this recommendation, CPD remains committed to regularly evaluating the training it provides to its members concerning the prohibition on the use of racial slurs and improving cultural competency.

**2. Ensure consistency and fairness in disciplinary recommendations for sustained findings involving the use of racial slurs by considering all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history.**

CPD agrees with this recommendation, and confirms that under existing policy CPD considers all aggravating and mitigating factors, including the CPD members' prior disciplinary history. Essential to implementing the directives identified in this letter and building trust in the community is holding CPD members accountable for violations.

Special Order S08-01-05, Conducting Log Number Investigations, sets out procedures for Log Number investigations conducted by the Bureau of Internal Affairs and accountability sergeants. Specifically with respect to penalty recommendations, S08-01-05 requires that each sustained finding contained within a CPD member's disciplinary history will be considered for the purposes of recommending discipline. When sustaining an allegation, the BIA investigator or accountability sergeant will document in writing and include in the investigative file within the CMS if any relevant or applicable mitigating or aggravating factors that were considered and applied in the determination of the recommended discipline. S08-01-05 further requires that the BIA Chief ensure that mitigating and aggravating factors are identified, consistently applied, and documented. The BIA Advocate and Advocate Section review the entire investigative file along with recommended disciplinary actions; use previous knowledge and materials from past arbitrations decisions, binding summary opinions, mediations, and settlement agreements that are germane to the specific investigation; and ensure that the accused member's complimentary and disciplinary information is included and was considered in the recommendation.

**3. Ensure allegations served to accused CPD members are accurate and consistent, including the proper spelling of all quoted words that the accused is alleged to have stated.**

CPD agrees that allegations served to accused CPD members should be accurate. These allegations are usually based on information received from the complainant during the initiation process. In the course of an investigation, additional facts are developed from witness and accused interviews, review of audio and video recordings, and other evidence that tends to prove or disprove an allegation. As with an investigation in any context, the evidence may vary from what was included in the initiation report, the allegations served on an accused or witness officer, and what a BIA Investigator or Accountability Sergeant ultimately concludes. For example, Special Order S08-01-05 provides that an accused or witness member will receive notice that they are under administrative investigation through the Notification of Charges/Allegations (CPD-44.115). This notice describes the nature of the complaint made against the accused member. In the course of the interview, the BIA Investigator or Accountability Sergeant may learn new or different facts that vary from what was originally included in the Notification of Charges/Allegations. While CPD strives to ensure that the allegations served on a member are accurate, it can be the case that an investigation uncovers facts that vary from these allegations.

Best regards,



Scott Spears  
General Counsel  
Chicago Police Department

cc: Fred Waller, Interim Superintendent, Chicago Police Department  
David Glockner, Inspector General  
Samuel Chae, Associate General Counsel for Public Safety, Office of Inspector General  
Dana O'Malley, Chief of Staff, CPD

Timothy Moore, Chief, Bureau of Internal Affairs, Chicago Police Department  
Deputy Chief Traci Walker, Bureau of Internal Affairs, Chicago Police Department



**LaDonna Candia-Flanagan**

Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety

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OIG's authority to produce reports of its findings and recommendations is established in the City of Chicago Municipal Code §§ 2-56-030(d), -035(c), -110, -230, and -240.

For further information about this report, please contact the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, 231 S. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604, or visit our website at [igchicago.org](https://igchicago.org).

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