

BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

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BURLINGTON OFFICERS TO ATTEND “BLACK ANGELS OVER TUSKEGEE” AT THE FLYNN CENTER AS CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

On the evening of January 29th, the Burlington Police Department will be sending its newly-hired recruits, its recently-graduated officers, its training and recruitment staff and its community affairs personnel to a performance of Layon Gray’s drama, “Black Angels Over Tuskegee,” at the Flynn Center for the Arts. The play follows six men on their journey to become the first black aviators in the United States Army Air Force during a tumultuous era of racial segregation. The Tuskegee Airmen conquered prejudice to form the 99th Pursuit Squadron, and went on to become one of the most highly-respected fighter groups of World War II. They paved the way for the full integration of the U.S. military.

"The story of the Tuskegee airmen speaks both to the deep roots of racism in America and the inspiration of those who successfully battle against it," said Mayor Miro Weinberger. "This is a story all Americans should know, and I am pleased that after this week it will be well known within the Burlington Police Department — a department with considerable responsibility for ensuring that people of all backgrounds feel safe and included in our City. Thank you to the Flynn Center and Chief Brandon del Pozo for making this happen."

"The Burlington Police Department serves a community that is growing more diverse by the day," Chief of Police Brandon del Pozo said. "To be the best cops we can be, we have to understand the struggles that people of color have faced in our nation. We strive to be a force at least as diverse as our city, one that welcomes people from all backgrounds into our ranks. A play about men of color who struggled to wear their country’s uniform and to risk their lives for it is poignant at this moment in American policing. A night of theater won’t erase the tensions between the police and some citizens, but if it increases an officer’s empathy towards them, then it was a successful night. We’d like to thank the Flynn Center for the Arts for offering us this opportunity."

"Having officers and staff attend the play and later discuss the central themes will serve to hone their understanding of and skills at cultural humility," Said Curtiss Reed, the Executive Director of the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity. "Linking the Flynn, the play and officer professional development is yet another example of out of the box thinking by Chief del Pozo."

After the show, Reed will be reconvening the group of officers who attended to reflect on the experience, and to enhance the insights they have gained from it.

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