



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – June 3rd, 2020

It is with a sad heart but an encouraged heart that I am writing this message today. Over the years we have seen the aftermath and the impacts on our communities after the death of a person of color at the hands of law enforcement. Professionals, scholars, activists and families have spoken loudly to the reasoning, rationale and justification of the actions taken by those involved. We hear over and over again that maybe this will be the “one” incident which will lead to change.

The reality is that we are blessed in America to have our own opinions, beliefs and are afforded the opportunity to disagree with each other, to include our country/government, without repression as long as that protest is peaceful. It seems that there is a very small group that choose to do their protesting in a way which is damaging, dangerous to others and outright illegal. Usually these actions do nothing for moving the conversation forward but only cause division and anger among the community that is impacted and ultimately weakening the freedom we enjoy across this great country. These illegal and damaging actions cut deeper into the wound and shift the focus from where it really needs to be.

As the Sheriff and a 40-year veteran of Law Enforcement I am sickened by what I watched happen to George Floyd. I cannot, nor would I try, to justify this in any way shape or form. I support the actions taken by the Minneapolis Police Department against those involved in this case and trust the Prosecutor and the Courts to take the proper time to determine the ultimate charges which should be brought against those involved. Our core mission as Law Enforcement professionals is to Protect and Serve all people within our community and to do so regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, military/veteran status, or personal bias. It is even more of a responsibility when the perpetrator is a member of law enforcement. We in Law Enforcement cannot and must not turn a blind eye to the wrongful or illegal actions of our coworkers and our integrity and the trust of the community is tarnished when we do so. I can honestly say no one hates a dishonest cop more than the hard-working honest cop that is putting their life on the line daily for their communities.

I am encouraged by the photos I have seen of a protestor shaking the hand of an officer standing on the front line of a disturbance, of the hugs being given to Law Enforcement personnel who have chosen to walk with those they serve in solidarity for their cause. I was brought to an emotional point when I saw protestors shielding an injured police officer from other protestors wishing to do him/her more harm.

Their courage to stand in the gap for someone they do not know and may not agree with shows that humanity can overcome even the worst of situations and times.

I am blessed in many ways personally and professionally. I have a supportive family which has been there for me throughout my many years in this great profession of Law Enforcement. A profession that all of us know is one that brings such great joy when we help others and great sorrow when we experience the pain that our community goes through every day. I am equally blessed with the community support I have experienced over my years in Law Enforcement from the citizens of Clark County.

But by no means are we in Law Enforcement perfect. When we put on that badge there isn't something that magically happens which gives us the ability to do everything right. It is our responsibility to you, those we serve and protect, to place the badge on a person who has demonstrated the ability to do this tough ever-changing job in a way which respects the rights of all those we serve. It is our responsibility to supervise and train those wearing the badge to be ethical and of the highest integrity and if they should fall it is our responsibility to you to do the right thing and hold them, and therefore ourselves accountable. If we do wrong, we own it and fix it! Not just when it is seen by a camera or citizen on the street but when it is seen internally by those that work with and supervise that individual. As the Sheriff of Clark County, I have said from day one "Hire Character-Teach Skill."

I am proud of the men and women of the Clark County Sheriff's Office, and how we select, train and supervise them. I am also proud of how we hold ourselves accountable – just as our community expects us too.

We as a nation are in tough times with the COVID-19 Pandemic and with the social unrest that is sweeping over our country. We as a nation and each of us individually are responsible for how we respond and how we together change the course of our future.

I pray for healing in this time of need!



Chuck E. Atkins
Sheriff