



WALNUT CREEK POLICE DEPARTMENT

Safety ~ Service ~ Honor

May 30, 2020

Dear Walnut Creek Community,

I have been personally struggling with how to share my thoughts with our residents since George Floyd was killed on May 25. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

It's important to say his name – George Floyd's life mattered. And now, this terrible event also matters, and none of us should be silent about it. His death at the hands of someone he was supposed to be able to trust is something I can't get out of my head. The despicable actions and images out of Minneapolis fill me with sorrow and disgust. And not just the action of the officer who took Mr. Floyd's life, but the inaction of the other officers who failed to perform one of the critical elements of our profession—as a first responder. We are supposed to run into danger to save others, not stand idly by as it happens. I am heartbroken for the loss of Mr. Floyd's life, the utter contempt for Mr. Floyd's dignity, and for yet another tarnish to law enforcement's badge.

Earlier this year, I launched a Walnut Creek Police Community Advisory Board, comprised of a cross section of 16 community members that I expect to provide me perspective outside of my law enforcement background, and help me see blind spots in how our Department operates. We met virtually for two hours last Thursday night, and although not on our agenda, I shared my raw thoughts on this atrocious incident with the Board members, and they shared their emotional ones with me as well. It was a reminder how important it is to have these discussions with your family, your friends, and in our community. I listened to and learned from the perspectives of each person, and was reminded how valuable it is to hear their voices.

I have been steeped in law enforcement, law enforcement culture, and have been a staunch supporter of all that is honorable in this profession for over three decades. I have faith in our Walnut Creek Police Department, in our people, and in our mission. I know how complex and difficult this job can be. I know how dangerous it can be. I also know what this job is not. It is not meant to be the exercise of power over another. It does not give us license to abuse anyone, especially people of color. People should not be in fear of us.

The killing of Mr. Floyd is a violation of all that is good in our profession. What we have seen is beyond debate. The blatant abuse of power is unacceptable to all of us, whether we wear a badge or not. We simply cannot stand for the mistreatment and evil we have all seen.

I support the right of all who want to peacefully protest this killing. Your Walnut Creek Police Department will ensure you have that right. We are on the same side. This travesty cannot be tolerated by any of us. This is not acceptable. It never will be acceptable.

Very respectfully,

Thomas Chaplin

Thomas Chaplin
Chief of Police