

Good morning. Thanks to Chief Howell for his leadership. We are fortunate to live in a City that has taken community oriented policing seriously for decades. There are officers who work hard every single day to collaborate and partner with our community residents for good. And fairly or unfairly, when something like the murder of an African American citizen happens at the hands of police officers anywhere in our country, it undermines and erodes public confidence and trust in policing everywhere, including right here in the City of Racine.

George Floyd was murdered by a police officer. We are all reeling from the trauma of seeing George Floyd be murdered right in front of us by officers who had sworn to serve and protect their community, while other officers stood by and failed to act. We must acknowledge the trauma, the hurt, the anguish that so many in our community are feeling.

And we must acknowledge that George Floyd's name is one in a heartbreaking roster of names of African American citizens taken from their families and communities by racism and systemic violence.

I see and hear Racine's African American community members – like so many across the country - saying they are tired, tired of this violence against black bodies, tired of the lack of accountability, tired of the continued uphill fight for justice and for basic rights and safety.

I hear you. I am tired, too. I see and hear your anguish, your pain, the trauma that racism has inflicted on you, your families, your neighborhoods, and our entire City.

Racism is real. Implicit bias is real. George Floyd was killed right in front of us and we have every reason to cry out for justice and accountability.

Let me be absolutely clear: if what happened to George Floyd happened in the City of Racine, I would do everything in my power to immediately have that officer fired and brought to justice. I would do everything in my power to also hold accountable the other officers who stood silently by and allowed this murder to occur.

Let me also acknowledge that the outpouring of outrage, sadness, and anger over George Floyd's murder comes as our entire nation is in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty, fear, and worry.

Our African American community members are being disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

They are also being disproportionately affected by the accompanying economic fall-out.

They are worried about their health, their economic security, and George Floyd's death was a hurtful reminder that they also must be worried about their basic safety and rights.

While our hearts are hurting and we want to take to the streets to gather peacefully to be heard and to mourn together, there are also people in those crowds who are intent on sparking violence.

Last night, they burned our Thelma Orr Community Oriented Policing house. Thelma Orr was one of Racine's civil rights heroines, whose leadership for the cause of justice is core to our City's identity.

To those from outside our community who are seeking to come to our City and cause harm, let me be unequivocal in stating: we do not want you here. We will reject your efforts and actively respond to your attempts to destroy properties and incite violence in our City. This destruction and violence does nothing to support our shared goals of social and economic justice.

We cannot let those who are intent on starting fires and inciting violence use peaceful protesters as human shields. By being part of a crowd right now, you're helping those few who are seeking to destroy our community and whose violent, destructive actions are detracting from George Floyd's memory and from the cause of justice we all seek.

We must continue our work to build a more just society. **Black lives *do* matter.** As Mayor, I will continue to speak out against injustice and work to bring our community together to heal and bring about change.

I want to close my remarks by asking for peace but with the understanding that people need the ability to call out injustice, demand change, and organize.

I know there will be marches and protests. I also know that my office has been contacted by residents who want to act but because of the very real threat coronavirus presents in our community, they aren't comfortable attending protests right now, in the midst of a pandemic.

To that end, we want to encourage people tomorrow at 6pm, in the spaces they live, or in your front porches, to kneel for nine minutes or light candles. Do it outside where people can see one another. We are also calling on churches in the City to ring their bells for 9 minutes in honor and in memory of George Floyd and as a clarion call for justice in our community moving forward.

As a City we do need to show solidarity. We need outlets for the justifiable hurt and sadness and frustration we are all feeling. But we also need peace and I hope that we can maintain our peace locally while rightfully demanding justice and change.

Thank you.