



# Bethlehem's Year of Floyd (1): The Mayor and Chief get out in front

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [George Floyd anniversary](#), [George Floyd killing](#) April 27, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts regarding the George Floyd anniversary* 

ref: **Let's meaningfully remember George Floyd on the anniversary of his death**

ref: **Mayor Donchez: "We in Bethlehem must condemn acts of violence and hatred"**

ref: **Chief DiLuzio: "We as police officers condemn what happened to Mr. Floyd"**

Gadfly is modestly proposing that City Council mark the anniversary of George Floyd's death at a Public Safety meeting on May 25, 2021. A year gives us some distance on our efforts to act on the significance of his death and a perspective on the challenges it presented to the City. Gadfly herewith begins a quasi-history of the "Year of Floyd" as seen through the pages of the blog. One man's version. Join in.

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George Floyd died Monday, May 25, 2020. Turmoil started virtually immediately and spread throughout the country. There was a large peaceful demonstration here radiating from the Rose Garden to Payrow Plaza on Saturday May 30. Mayor Donchez's statement appeared on the City web site Sunday May 31 (it is no longer there) and in the Morning Call Wednesday June 3. Chief DiLuzio delivered his statement at the City Council meeting Tuesday June 2.

We begin our quasi-history with the statements by Mayor Donchez and Police Chief DiLuzio representing the City's official response to the tragedy of Floyd's death and the ongoing societal disruption that followed.

The Mayor and the Chief are clearly and understandably worried about the spread of disruption to Bethlehem.

They are also concerned with distancing themselves and our City from the blatant evil of the murder and its racial dimension.

A pantheon of Jefferson, Jesus, King, Kennedy, Ben Franklin, and Edmund Burke are invoked.

Horror, condemnation, outrage, sadness, shock, disgust, repulsion, pain, and righteousness are expressed.

Both men protest that their hands and the hands of their City are clean.

The Mayor remembers the “melting pot” utopia in the South Bethlehem of his youth “where there was no room for racism, bigotry, and intolerance.” He replicated that utopia in the classroom during his career at Allen High School “where he made sure [his] students were tolerant of all who attended . . . Black and White, Latino and Asian, Gay and Straight, Male, Female and Transgender [?], Rich and Poor, and all who made up the city, the Lehigh Valley and the country.” In present-day Bethlehem, the Mayor says, “we are one.”

The Chief is personally horrified and outraged at what he sees. And there is no blue wall in his department: “We as police officers condemn what happened to Mr. Floyd. . . . What the four Officers did was wrong. What Officer Derek Chauvin did was criminal.” The Chief and his officers ensured peaceful protest in our town, felt unity with the protestors. And he runs a diverse department accredited both by the state and nationally (a dual accreditation that only 4% of departments have), in which training is continuous, in which everyone agrees “that a properly trained officer would never use this type of force under the circumstances.”

The Chief oversees a departmental micro-utopia analogous to the Mayor’s urban macro-one.

Gadfly called these statements by the Mayor and the Chief powerful statements at the time, for which he received some significant push-back.

He was glad the Mayor and Chief recognized the need to speak up, to get out in front.

But the limitation in their words becomes even more obvious from the distance of almost a year.

Ironically, that limitation is pellucid in the Chief's choice of words from Edmund Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Neither the Mayor nor the Chief point to anything specific to do, point to anything that needs to be done locally, articulate any action that we good people (or they) in Bethlehem should take.

Again, "We are one," says the Mayor, triumphantly but perhaps complacently.

As if nothing of the Floyd sort and its aftermath would/could happen here.

As if we had no "work" to do in "reckoning with race."

There is a sense of self-satisfaction in their words, a sense that they speak from a kind of moral elevation or eminence.

Gadfly is a generation older than the Mayor, but it looks like we were both raised on the same mythic conception of America as a melting pot. However, there are few American literature and history courses these days that would frame our country that way without also posing a powerful counter-narrative. We have come to understand that the myth of the melting pot is a myth that serves white privilege and also is a way to blame minorities who don't succeed. Likewise, proclaiming, as he does in his recent state of the city address, that the "American Dream," another American cultural myth, is "thriving here" is tricky. Gadfly remembers statistics about low incomes on the Southside and low rates of home ownership on the Southside (home ownership traditionally seen as a stepping stone to achievement of the American Dream) discussed right here on this blog lately and wonders if this would be the kind of thing the Mayor could say if he gave his address in the auditorium at Donegan. Gadfly also remembers the oft-repeated words of our younger Allen High School Councilman about the need to see ourselves and our city through the eyes of the cultural "other." That "Canary" has indicated that the view would be disillusioning.

So, as understandable as these statements by the Mayor and Chief and their purposes might be, Gadfly feels our “Year of Floyd” didn’t get off to the best possible start.

*to be continued . . .*

**The Bethlehem Gadfly**