

# Mayor Donchez: “We in Bethlehem must condemn acts of violence and hatred”

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, George Floyd killing May 31, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing* 

## “My comments on Minneapolis” Sunday, May 31, 2020

Almost 250 years ago, Thomas Jefferson, declared, “That all men are created equal.” Our nation has had a long and difficult history dealing with those simple and profound words. Since 1776 it has taken numerous conflicts and much bloodshed for us to live up to those words. And yet, have we? Once again, we are grieving as a nation and standing together to condemn the shocking violence in Minneapolis and the innocent loss of life, and those simple words of Thomas Jefferson, somehow got lost in translation or understanding.

I grew up in South Bethlehem. The words “all men are created equal” were words to live by in my neighborhood and in my world. We were a melting pot, a cauldron of hope where there was no room for racism, bigotry, and intolerance. We had our differences – culturally, linguistically, racially and religiously, and yet we were a community. When we had to, we locked arms across the many lines and boundaries of our differences and dedicated ourselves to unity. Because of that, we were able to achieve some early measure of social and economic justice and equality for many in our community.

Those lessons of social and economic justice and equality traveled with me and were a daily part of my 35 years as a teacher at Allen High School in Allentown. I made sure my students were tolerant of all who attended Allen High School – 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.

As the son of a police officer and as a Mayor, watching the images from Minneapolis have been tough. I have great respect and admiration for our police officers, so it was very emotional watching that Minneapolis

police officer suffocate handcuffed George Floyd with a knee to his neck. I know that almost all police officers adhere to the law and would never hurt someone like that, and yet this behavior continues and it hurts – it hurts the police and it hurts every one of us.

The kind of behavior we have seen in Minneapolis has no place in America or anywhere in the world. We in Bethlehem must condemn acts of violence and hatred, and are deeply saddened by the loss of life of a fellow human being. This is not just a race issue, this is a human issue, and we are all connected by our shared human experience.

Max Lucado wrote, “If Jesus could teach us only one thing, it would be that a person has value simply because they are a person.”

This is not the time to pretend that there’s not a problem in America.

This is not the time to turn our backs on racism.

This is not the time to accept innocent lives being taken from us.

This is not the time to think this doesn’t affect you.

This is not the time to sit back and say nothing.

This is not the time to think that you can’t be part of the solution and the change needed for this to stop.

Benjamin Franklin said, “Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.”

This is a time for outrage, but it is not a time for violence. The hatred that comes with racism, bigotry, and intolerance will not be condoned or supported here in Bethlehem or anywhere else for that matter. We are one. Our anger and abhorrence must be converted to something more positive – to hope, to faith and to love.

To quote Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

Mayor Bob Donchez