

south  euclid

COME TOGETHER & THRIVE



A Letter to the Community from Mayor Georgine Welo & Police Chief Kevin Nietert

Dear Residents:

In the spring of 1968, riots erupted in cities across the United States following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The truth is, most of us had not yet been born or were too young to remember that awful period in our nation's history. Like most, what we know about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. we both learned in school. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man of peace and never condoned violence.

While we have made progress toward racial equality, there is still work to be done before we realize King's vision to live in a society where all people are treated equally. How wonderful would it be if we could say that we learned a valuable lesson from King's assassination?

Sadly, the unnecessary death of George Floyd is a reminder of how little has changed. We are both sorrowful over the death of George Floyd and deeply regret that it came at the hands of a police officer, whom society trusted to uphold the law.

Many of us are struggling to understand why. Why does a police officer force his knee into the neck of another human being for eight minutes and 46 seconds, ignoring 16 pleas of "I can't breathe," while three other police officers stand by and do nothing to help? There is no acceptable answer.

For too long, the majority of Americans, decent and caring individuals, have stood by and allowed hate and those who have little regard for the life of another person to go unchecked. We have rationalized accepting behavior that is unacceptable because we're too busy or afraid to get involved.

Silence is inexcusable. It's time for us all to get involved and to have our voices heard. Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, once said, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

As Chief of Police and Mayor, of the City of South Euclid, we have accepted the magnitude of both the challenge and the responsibility to effect change, by working tirelessly to make this a reality through our words, choices, and actions each and every day.

It would be easy, over the events of the last few days, to suggest that we are dealing with an insurmountable problem, but every journey starts with a single step. We have made progress towards diversity and inclusion efforts in our community and in our Police Department and we have implemented many of the recommendations detailed in President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

But no matter how much progress we've made, we know it's not enough and we need to continue to work to foster a culture of building trust, operating transparently, and nurturing legitimacy, where all voices are heard.

The day before his assassination, King spoke out against the use of violence and aggression to achieve racial equality. In his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, he said, what we need is to stand together to make America a better nation. History is once again presenting an opportunity for us to become better and do better. This is the time for us to come together, to truly listen and learn from one another.

As public servants, it is incumbent upon each of us to facilitate change. We hope you will embrace this moment and share your thoughts, ideas, and concerns as we move forward.

Sincerely,



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