



June. 1st, 2020

Friends,

As the nation enters the sixth day of protests, the actions of a few are beginning to distract us from core truths that we must hold if we are to build a better, stronger, fairer, more just nation, in the wake of the despicable actions of four police officers in Minneapolis.

It is a core truth that the officer charged, and those that will be charged, in the death of George Floyd are entitled to due process under the law, the very law they swore to uphold. It is also a core truth, that their cowardly, barbaric act, must be universally condemned loudly, clearly, strongly and continuously. When our attention begins to get distracted, as it all too often does, we must think about those nine torturously long minutes that George Floyd endured as his life was callously squeezed from him.

It is a core truth that the overwhelmingly vast majority of individuals protesting are standing for what's right with America, by pointing to what's wrong with America and to that which will make America stronger. There is great strength in justice; criminal justice, economic justice, health justice, the justice of opportunity and the most basic justice of all – the justice of equality. Greatness is illusive, a false promise, until all are treated equally. The righteous passion of those that stand up, night after night, must remain with us, compelling us to accept the burden of this moment, the burden to be truthful with ourselves. To say that which is right, and to admit that which is wrong. To embrace, not flee from, the discomfort that occurs when we try to understand how we have treated the other, to understand how the other may perceive us.

It is a core truth that the right of protest does not embrace a right of criminality. Violence and thievery not only denigrate the legitimacy of protest, but distract us from the critical issues being raised. As so many protesters have done, we must continually condemn and respond to the violence and lawlessness. To lapse into violence undoes anything that has been achieved, and makes the burden of future advance all the more difficult.

It is a core truth that the vast majority of police officers are public servants who will run into the face of danger so that we can be safe. They do a job voluntarily that very few of us would do. Without safety chaos reigns. But, it is also a core truth, that there are undeniable abuses committed by some that must be addressed and the hard work of achieving unbiased policing continued. It's an uncomfortable process, but attacks on police and police property have no place within the pantheon of effective ways to change society, changes that must take place. Attacks on police are violence, plain and simple, and the full force of the law must be brought against those perpetrators.

Will the last nine minutes of George Floyd's life be the beginning of America's Spring? Not if we get distracted. But if we don't, if we don't get distracted, if we are resolute, there is so, so much that we can do as a nation. Some of it easy, some of it very hard, but all of it can be done. With so many others, I have spent the better part of my adult life working to reduce gun violence in our nation. The ever bright polar star of that movement is that no life should be wasted. When senseless death occurs, as all too often happens at the end of a barrel of a gun, we must relentlessly be motivated to stop more violence and strive to make sure that basic human dignity is afforded all. We are at that moment.

We must not get distracted.

Yours,

Richard