



## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF TEXAS

June 8, 2020

To my ILTexas Family and Friends,

This is a personal letter from my heart to you and as such, I am going to say some things of which you may or may not agree. You may want to stop reading now, but I cannot remain silent to the senseless death of an American Citizen, George Floyd, by a police officer two weeks ago.

I am a sixty-year-old white male who was raised on a farm in a small rural community by a poor working-class single mother – uneducated but a strong woman of faith and a very hard worker. I had the honor of graduating from Texas A&M University and was commissioned as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. In the commissioning ceremony, I took a solemn oath “to protect and to defend the constitution of the United States of America, against all enemies, foreign or domestic...” and I swore that oath again as I was promoted to First Lieutenant and again when I was promoted to Captain and again as I was sworn in as a Major. It has been one of my greatest honors to serve for 20 years, and to live up to that oath “to protect and to defend the constitution of the United States of America...”

But what does that have to do with George Floyd?

I also had the honor of leading 200 Marines and Sailors into combat as the Commanding Officer of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines as part of Task Force Grizzly. Our mission was to infiltrate into enemy lines three days before the ground war began. Before we went into battle, I gathered all the leaders in the company – every Corporal, every Sergeant, every Staff Sergeant, and every Lieutenant. With God as my witness, I told them that we would use every bit of force available to destroy and to defeat our enemy in the battle to free Kuwait. However, the very second that the enemy soldier put down his weapon, it became our solemn duty to “protect and defend” those enemy soldiers because they were now POWs and under our protection. I also told them that if any of them caused any harm to those POWs, as their Commanding Officer, I would do everything I could to ensure that they were convicted at a Courts Martial and they would spend the rest of their lives in a military prison – if they failed to protect and defend.

We did our job. We took many prisoners and we protected them.

Unfortunately, not everyone who wears a uniform lives up to that standard. I was sickened years later when I first heard of what happened to POWs at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. Those soldiers failed to live up to “protect and defend” and unfortunately there are too many other incidents as well.

But what does that have to do with George Floyd?

We live in the greatest country on Earth that is protected by men and women who take that solemn oath to protect and to defend as their solemn duty. They serve in the United States Military and they serve as Police Officers across this great country – at least 99% are serving and honoring that solemn oath.



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However, those honorable officers did not show up that night for George Floyd. Thank God it was caught on video because “no one would believe it.” For 8 minutes and 46 seconds, a police officer held his knee on the neck of George Floyd (an American Citizen, not an enemy soldier and not a POW) until George was dead.

I don’t have words to describe my disbelief, my disappointment, my absolute disgust, my frustration, and my anger as to how this seems to continue to happen to our fellow Americans.

This should be fixed, this can be fixed, and this will be fixed. But this doesn’t even begin to correct what our fellow Americans have had to live with and fixing this will require action by all of us.

I did not truly begin to understand until over the last few years when my friends started honestly sharing the things that I, an American white male, have never experienced and because of that cannot truly ever really understand.

When my friend, who was a former Republican statewide elected officeholder, who happens to be black, shared that he and his wife have discussed that he might stop carrying his legal firearm in his car just in case he gets stopped by a rogue police officer who might see him as only a black man with a gun...

When my Aggie Classmate who honorably served 20 plus years in the United States Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel asked me if I had told my neighbors that it was okay for him to stay at my house with his daughter when I was going to be out of town just because they may see him as a black man and call the police...

When as parents we all fear when our children are teenagers and they start driving, but for my black friends, fear at a deeper level. That when their children are driving, a simple traffic stop could result in their children being killed just because they are black...

When as a parent the pride I felt when my children were allowed to take the parents nicer car for those special events, but when my friend whose son is black was allowed to take his parent's nice car, he was stopped because “son you don’t look like you can afford a nice car like this,” has to prove that his father's name is on the insurance paper, returns home in frustration, in anger, and in tears that those assumptions are made just because he is black...

When a black man who is a bird watcher has the police called on him by a white woman because he had asked her to obey the law and leash her dog...

When a black man who is in the First-Class line getting on an airplane is called out by a white woman because there is no way he can afford a First-Class ticket just because he is black...

When black customers are viewed as a potential criminal or not possibly being able to afford the merchandise just because they are black...



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When my high school friend texts me asking what she should tell her black sons and grandsons to do so that white people will not be afraid of them. So that her sons and grandsons can be safe and not treated unfairly for being black...

When a highly educated principal of a school chokes up with tears in remembering how he was treated as a kid by some police officers just because he was black...

When my Sunday School teacher recalls in his youth not being able to sit where he wanted to sit because he was black...

When one of my teachers bravely shares “Right now I am a little disappointed as a teacher of color that you have not addressed the racial tension going on in the world. As an international school, your African American students and teachers are hurting right now...”

If we can stop for a moment and if we can truly listen to our black sisters and brothers, then we can slowly begin to understand in some very small way the constant pressure, pain, fear, and beating down of constantly being on guard that our fellow Americans have to live with just because they are black.

This week as Mr. George Floyd’s body is returned to Texas and is laid to rest may all of us “be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.”

May we who call ourselves Christian live up to what Christ himself commanded us to do “to love our neighbors as our self” and may we “seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly.”

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

The time for silence is over.

**BLACK LIVES MATTER!!!**

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