



Lakewood
Colorado

Dear Lakewood,

This has been one of the most challenging times that I have had in my tenure as mayor. As a leader, I feel that I must have an answer or a response to just about everything. This time I don't. This time I am trying to listen, trying to learn and trying to understand. When Mr. George Floyd was murdered right in front of our eyes, I was horrified, angry and stunned. In a message to the Lakewood Police Department, Police Chief Dan McCasky said, "The death of George Floyd was outrageous, inexcusable, and appalling." Sadly, this wasn't the first incident, and it won't be the last. It seems like a broken record. This has brought me a week of reflecting on my life, my values, my leadership and the great divisions and systemic failures in our country.

The Lakewood Police Department was born in 1970 during another time of tremendous upheaval. It sought to be something different. It emphasized education by being one of the first to require a college degree. It promoted professionalism and "the concepts of a kinder, gentler and smarter police force," then known as the Department of Public Safety. The foundation and construct were built on the tenets of "law enforcement responsiveness, citizen involvement, education, and a commitment to do the right thing, thus leading to the motto Integrity, Intelligence, Initiative." This model has served the community well for 50 years. (Quotes are from "A Celebration of Excellence," a book about the department's history, p.5)

I am proud of the men and women of the Lakewood Police Department who day in and day out serve with dignity and honor. Chief McCasky further stated, "Public trust in law enforcement is what allows us to serve our community. That trust has been shaken. There are no short-term fixes to retain or regain our community's trust. We must work at it every single minute of every single day, and we can never take it for granted." For those who have inquired, I want them to know that Lakewood Police are highly skilled and trained. Agents are trained in de-escalating techniques and crisis intervention techniques. I can say with great faith that they are always looking inward to see how they can do better and how they can continue to be leaders in policing. Their community policing model means that they are engaged and work to build relationships with all residents.

For true and lasting change, "work at it every single minute of every single day." Not only a week or two after a tragedy but daily. We must work through our thoughts, words and deeds. We can't continue to turn a blind eye to the ills of society or say that doesn't happen here. We can't turn away because it's easier or because we don't have an answer, which is where I was when I started to write this. We must look deeper than the police. We must look at ourselves, at our institutions and our way of life.

Love, respect and understanding are the foundation on which to build. Together, let's work for justice, work for equality, and stand up and say racism is not welcome here. Let's unite to lift those in poverty, those struggling with mental health, those who are hard to love. Let's work to increase understanding, educational opportunities, housing options and job training. Let's build community and brotherhood, and let's embrace what we have said as a city, "Welcome to Lakewood, we are building an inclusive community." Let us all commit to saying no more, let us commit to loving our neighbors.

It's important for us to listen to you. I need to learn from you, I need to hear about your experiences in Lakewood, and I want to hear the good, the bad and the ugly. I want to serve you, and I want to see us be the generation that truly brings change. Email, call me, let's connect, let's organize and let's learn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam Paul".

Adam Paul
Mayor