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My Thoughts on How Policing Might Help Realize the Promise of a Democracy of the People and for the People

The tragically fractured relationship between the police and the communities they serve was put on glaring display in the sad and violent aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, an African American man, by former police officer, Derek Chauvin, on May 25, 2020.

When Floyd's last breathing moments were live streamed across the internet by onlookers who witnessed the incident, the nation choked as it attempted to digest how far removed we are from the ideals of the American democracy we proudly proclaim to the rest of the world. The manner and resulting impact of Floyd's death had delivered a blunt and critical wake up call. Something had to change; but what, and how?

By definition, democracy, derived from the Greek word *demos*, characterizes the power of the people for the people. In other words, those who lead and police the population are chosen by, and accountable to the people. Democracy embodies a lifestyle that is synonymous with living in a society that recognizes and celebrates the strength and beauty of our diversity, does not exclude anyone based on their ethnicity, cultural or religious beliefs, or political affiliations, and provides equitable access to decent income, housing, healthcare, and education. It also espouses the freedom to choose our lawmakers and the ability to help reform laws so that everyone can enjoy a good quality of life.

Traditionally, police officers have been appointed as figures of authority designated to protect and serve the people by maintaining law and order in our communities. While events such as occurred with Floyd can derail relations between the police and in particular, minority communities, and undoubtedly increase friction between minority and majority ethnic groups, the responsibility of narrowing the gap of understanding to create constructive collaboration lies with both the police and the leaders who offer guidance to impacted communities. Therefore, the solution is rooted in fostering healthy communication and openness through compassion for others.

I believe that leaders of the communities must be willing to embrace and show support for the work done by the police and how they risk their lives to help and save others. Additionally, the police, through their actions in how they interact with civilians, must demonstrate care and value for their lives and their concerns. Presenting a united front, being willing to come together, have dialogue with each other, and actively listen will help each side discern how they can help the other and will reduce uncertainty, distrust, and fear. Further, we live in an age where people are more tuned in to what they see, especially on social media, versus what they hear. To this end, the role of the media is also vital in updating the public on all forms of positive progress and development between the police and our communities.

Finally, if we are to enable the type of cooperation necessary to realize true democracy, it is important to acknowledge that democracy is all of us working together for the ultimate good of everyone. Let us also not forget that the police are of the people, and so, represent the people.