



# Memorandum

**To:** PVAMU Campus Community

**From:** **Dr. Keith T. Jemison**  
**Associate Vice President for Public Safety &**  
**Chief of Police**

**Date:** **June 10, 2020**

**Re:** **Thoughts about the death of George Floyd**

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I have to admit that I was hesitant to put my thoughts in writing. Frankly, I didn't think that anyone would really care about what I had to say about what was happening during this time of social unrest. As it became clear that some wanted to hear from me, I needed time to collect my thoughts about what it meant to be Black and blue. I was concerned that my feelings might be divided, perhaps even clouded, between my responsibilities as a police chief, as a father, and more importantly, as an African American man. I also needed to reconcile my feelings with my theological beliefs as my Christianity is an integral part of who I am. Ultimately, this period of self-reflection only reinforced my initial visceral response.

That being said, I must officially and personally condemn the callous and negligent actions of the police officers that resulted in the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. While there are some indications that this type of technique was permitted in the state of Minnesota, that fact evidences a policing culture that is tone deaf and wholly disconnected from modern law enforcement training techniques. This is NOT how progressive law enforcement professionals are trained nor is its application consistent with our obligation to fulfill our community caretaking responsibilities. It was absolutely wrong. It was offensive. It was heartbreaking. It was and is inconsistent with the reasons why I donned the badge and took the oath of office. The officers in this case failed in their fundamental constitutional responsibility....to preserve life. Not only did they fail to preserve it, they failed to prioritize it, and clearly, they failed to value it. In doing so, they violated their oaths and betrayed the trust bestowed upon them by our society and the community that they were sworn to protect.

Years ago, I adopted a department ethos for UPD that says, "Above all...do right", and have been heard to consistently say that good police officers are good people. It is clear that "right" was not done in this case and that those who were involved fell short of our expectations of "good people". We have to do better. Collectively, we have to resolve to remove those within the profession that do not uphold the tenets thereof. We have to renew our efforts to hire good people...people who care...people who love...and people



**PRAIRIE VIEW  
A&M UNIVERSITY**

**University Police Department**  
**Chief of Police Keith T. Jemison, Ed.D.**



who value our differences. We have to prioritize training that continually emphasizes and reinforces these commitments and responsibilities and hold those in the criminal justice system to them as a whole. As a profession, when we see something, we have to say something and more importantly, we have to ACT!

Where do we go from here? Honestly, I am not completely sure. What I am certain of is that change must occur. I am also certain that wherever we go, that we must do it together. I look forward to the courageous conversations ahead, however uncomfortable they may be. I am convinced that the collective input of learned and thoughtful participants will stimulate productive and effective change.

Just my thoughts...