

Texarkana Area Community Leadership Coalition (TACLCL)
PO Box 3082
Texarkana, TX 75504

Date: June 15, 2020

To: Texarkana Texas City Officials
Attn: Mayor and City Council

From: Rev. Chaurcey D. Boyd, CEO

Dear Mayor Bob Bruggeman, and City Council:

Introduction:

It has been a long time since I last communicated with you. It was back in 2016-2017 when I wrote you concerning the Texarkana Area Christian Leadership Conference (TACLCL). The Conference Theme was All Lives Matter With Special Focus on Blue and Black/White Lives Matter National Themes. I carefully formulated the theme to recognize that everyone matters equally to me no matter the profession or skin color. The theme recognizes that police consists of all skin colors while at the same time recognizing there are challenges relatively unique to persons of various skin colors. It is life. It is at its core spiritual warfare showing up in the natural.

The conference did take place. That was my entry into the community development/engagement arena outside of being a minister and computer and insurance business owner. I must say I was somewhat disappointed at the lack of response from the church community and the local law enforcement community. In fact, only the Texarkana Texas police department responded and showed up. I appreciate then Assistant Chief Schutte attending and speaking; two of the Texarkana Texas Police Chaplains also attended for which they are also appreciated. I had hoped that more of the church and law enforcement communities would have both the courage and concern sufficient to engage the community on endeavors to improve the community.

I also learned at the conference in listening to the various speakers that there is even more than I thought a major misunderstanding and a lack of appreciation for the various factors that inform the interaction between law enforcement and the citizenry.

This has always been an extremely part-time task for me. And other things took priority since 2017 although I have continued to study both the problems and the solutions. This includes constructing a website called Texarkana Insight (link identified below) where I am trying to consolidate pertinent critical success factor like transparent information for my understanding and community visibility.

Law Enforcement Issues:

I realize that law enforcement exists primarily to respond to negatives that occur in the community. Sometimes and I believe most of the time they respond properly; but, sometimes unfortunately they respond improperly. Therefore, it is important to both address police response and reduce such

negatives though we will never be able to totally eliminate them. Negatives that influence and produce many law enforcement responses include, but is not limited to, defects in morality and large-scale disproportionate disparity in education, poverty, unemployment, and registered businesses, all of which are themselves interrelated. Many of these factors I document at Texarkana Insight. TACLCLC initiatives to address these negatives are outlined at the TACLCLC link given below.

In light of lessons learned at the 2017 conference and my continued research I decided to strategically rename the initiative to Texarkana Area Community Leadership Coalition (TACLCLC) for the next phase. This coalition is about both formal and informal autonomous connections.

While I was preparing to launch the next phase, COVID-19 and the George Floyd incident happened. Both of them were beyond my control. No matter who or what created them, I know that the Sovereign Creator God allowed them for his good purpose. Though ideally, progress would occur without sickness and death happening, I choose to look at both COVID-19 and George Floyd incidents to be something to incorporate into my continued development and implementation of this initiative yet not get sidetracked and consumed by them and surrounding attitudes and happenings.

On or about June 1, 2020, I sent emails to the local police departments once again. In that email I mentioned that in response to the George Floyd incident I have sent communication to national and state authorities regarding the need for Uniform Resistance and Deadly Force Specifications. I know national, state, and local authorities are aware of various calls for such changes even before the George Floyd incident; but, I just wanted to add my voice to that intensified call.

I noted that uniformity should be demanded at the Governors and Attorneys General level. I so state in order to minimize the impact of the separation of Federal and State powers built into our Constitution. Of course, if the Federal Government can do it so be it. But it is surely something the Governors and State Attorneys General should be able to uniformly quickly do.

Yet, in the absence of national and state uniformity, I believe a thorough review and if found to be defective, a revamping of local policies and procedures by local cities and police departments is doable. Therefore, I sent the email to the local departments because I hope that local agencies/department would undertake a review of its policies and procedures and associated training and internal enforcement and communicate those activities with and to the community in very clear and compelling terms. Indeed, in my letter to you in December 2016 I stated:

“It is important that city employees sufficiently and completely publicly recognize and address sensitive and controversial issues in a timely and effective manner. In your capacity as a representative of the people, we request you establish on your agenda periodic reviews to officially inform the public of what various applicable city employees (e.g. Police Department) are doing and plan to do to address national and local issues (Psalm 33:12-15;127:1) of the kind mentioned herein. We realize this review due to time constraints may involve a combination of your regular meetings and special meetings... We will certainly invite you and city employees to participate in our conferences. But we urge the city not to wait on or depend on us...”

With respect to local procedures, I have included on the Texarkana Insight website local department procedures manuals that I could locate on the web. Texarkana Texas has the best website for that in my view. However, I find it rather cumbersome to find desired information; and, I am a Computer Scientist by education and business, before semi-retirement.

Unfortunately, the other local law enforcement websites were either non-existent or even less informative. I have therefore requested that each local law enforcement agency/department provide me with a copy of their policies and procedures manual to place on the Texarkana insight site for easy transparent centralized community review and awareness on a continuous long-term basis. Bowie County Sheriff Office has been responsive by scanning and sending me their procedures manual. As I mentioned I have Texarkana Texas Police Department procedures manual. I plan to request other information as I proceed.

A young girl wrote to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., many years ago after he had been stabbed by a black woman concerned about something having to do with her son. The young girl said to Rev. King, I heard that if you had sneezed you would have died. She went on to say that although it should not matter I want to mention that I am a young white girl. Rev. King, I am so glad that you did not sneeze.

It is the spirit of that young white girl that I bring to the struggle. It is that spirit that my God, family, and church instilled in me. To recognize the struggle but not to hate and not to be unfair to anyone in the struggle no matter the skin color.

I said that to say this although it should not matter, I do mention that I am a black man, a black preacher, who has concern with the conditions of my black community in particular but also the condition of all people of all races in general. For I believe that making things better for the black community will make things better for all communities. I believe that the black community has work to do on itself and the white community has work to do on itself and we have work to do on each other together. It is life!

The George Floyd incident, surrounding protests, and responses to the protests all come together to provide opportunities for national, state, and local governments and the citizens to shine. Opportunity to move the nation in general and race relations in particular forward toward that more perfect union. A more perfect union our nation founders and subsequent leaders set as a vision for the nation. A vision set despite the nation's treatment of blacks in the early years and the lingering effect now. Will we rise to the occasion or sit idly by or engage in idle talk and minimally productive meetings without follow up actions and hope the storm will pass? We all have been guilty of such to some degree but let us not be as guilty this time!

Confederate Symbols:

The matter of the Confederate Statues and related symbols in Texarkana and beyond is an issue increasingly faced by our community and nation.

I go to the Post Office quite frequently. Personally, until recently I have never taken note in any meaningful way of the presence of the statue of concern. I am confident that is true of most people alive today. Yet, when the statue was first placed, I am confident that many people took note of it and held it of high importance. Moreover, Confederate statues and related symbols anywhere do not bother me. They can stay or they can go, either way I personally don't care. They don't bother me because when I think about them, I view them as symbols of defeat, as symbols of what not to try again. That goes for both slavery of blacks or any people, and of secession from the USA. Any such attempt is doomed for failure as has already been proven. Those days will never be again in these United States of America.

Nevertheless, I realize that such symbols cause concern for some people. Perhaps this is one reason God warns about the use of graven images in scriptures like Exodus 20. The focus there is of course on worship; but, in reality, we know there are varying degrees and different methods of worship.

So although the Confederate statues had much value and importance to most people who lived during that time, what value and importance do they really have to most people who live today?

I considered the matter of the Confederate symbols including statues and related symbols in 2017. In my analysis, I have concluded that it is best that such Confederate monuments of any size and prominence be placed in a private museum. The question then becomes what size and what prominence? The one in Texarkana I do not consider to be of any prominence given that it is of a mother and her son. That is markedly different than one of a Confederate General in the front of a State Capitol building or even if the one in Texarkana was right in front of the Post Office and Federal Court House door at normal eye level as one walks into the building.

Nevertheless, I urge the owner or if no willing owner found the city or cities (Texarkana Arkansas and Texas) to take responsibility to devise and communicate a plan to move it to a museum as a compromise though even that might not satisfy some black and white people. I even remember a black group marching against a Confederate statue being in a cemetery. So even we as blacks can be unreasonable at times in my view. It is a slippery slope. Even statues of some blacks are questionable to some. For example, that of Malcolm X who was reportedly once himself a racist but reportedly changed during the latter days of his life. Did any of the Confederate Generals or other soldiers change during the latter days of their life? Were some of the Confederate soldiers fighting as any soldier-citizen does even for causes he does not fully agree with or fully understand? As an Army Veteran I understand that dilemma that occurs sometimes.

But moving the Texarkana statue is the best option I believe, accompanied by clear communication and explanation to the community as to why and timing.

One advantage of COVID-19 is the flow of Federal money that possibly could be used for such purposes or at least Federal money that will probably flow as a result of massive protests in response to the George Floyd incident.

The Firefighter Facebook Post:

Now for the Firefighter incident. I do believe the 90-day suspension without pay and disallowance from supervisory position for 5 years is much more than is warranted for what the Firefighter did regarding the Facebook post. That is, unless, the person has some previous relatively near-term misbehavior incidents that informed the punishment for this incident. Based on what I read, at most he demonstrated insufficient sensitivity to the plight of many Black Americans like many others do and which many blacks demonstrate insufficient sensitivity to the plight of many White Americans. Yet, I did not see him mention race nor peaceful protesters. So I certainly was not offended by it as a black man. In my view, it is a disservice to the black community and the American community to overreact to people mischaracterization and stereotyping of another's actions. To me such stereotyping is itself reverse racism that has demonstrated tremendous influential power over someone's career and family life. I have a saying that is this: Let us not be the evil we despise in others!

Nevertheless, mandated transparent sensitivity training within the fire department and all city departments much like we did in the mid-70s in the US Army is appropriate.

Moreover, I don't know if it is true or not. But I saw a Facebook post that said there are no black Firefighters in Texarkana. If that is true if you really want to do something that really shows understanding and appreciation for the black community then I urge you to invest in increased intensified initiatives to bring black Firefighters into the city agency.

The money seemingly saved from the suspended Firefighter's salary could be spent on things like advertisements in the newspaper, radio stations, churches, Historically Black Colleges/Universities, and other places with mostly black listeners and patrons, as well as other avenues/initiatives to encourage black applicants to be Firefighters, etc.

Thank you for your service to Texarkana, USA and the nation. You are appreciated!

/s/

Rev. Chaurcey D. Boyd, CEO

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