



**PRESS RELEASE**

From the office of:  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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To the citizens of Anoka County-

Over the past couple weeks, I have written several posts, spoken to the media and expressed my opinions publicly numerous times as it relates to my stance about the horrific circumstances surrounding the death of George Floyd. However, I continue to have inquiries about our office and our "Culture".

These are fair questions and I have tried and keep up with the influx of messages. I think the best way to share my stance, and our "Culture" at the sheriff's office is to remain as transparent and open as possible. As such, I am sharing with each of you an exact internal e-mail (*Below*) that I sent to the entire Anoka County Sheriff's Office on **May 27<sup>th</sup>**. This will allow you to "Look behind the curtain" and see who we really are and what we are about. (*It should be noted that at the time of writing I did not have the details that we have today, nor had we experienced the full extent of the recent destruction to our cities*)

I also want to thank you for the outpouring of support that our office has received in recent days. The members of the Anoka County Sheriff's Office continue to serve you with pride and honor as our communities pursue a positive healing process in which we ALL grow stronger – TOGETHER. We are an office that strives to hire the best, train to modern standards, embrace best practices, hold each other accountable and exceed your expectations. Our community-oriented vision and pursuit of excellence is part of the reason we have had no excessive use of force complaints for many years and why we have such strong relationships across the region. We are committed to serve and dedicated to protect every single person without regard to their ethnicity, background, orientation or social status. We consider it an honor to be in service to our communities.

*May 27, 2020 e-mail:*  
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**Good afternoon Team ACSO.**

I write today with a heavy heart.

I am saddened to see our cities being torn apart. I am sickened that Minnesota is in the international spotlight for poor policing practices. This is even harder because typically Minnesota is *well known* as being on the forefront of excellence in the law enforcement community. I am concerned knowing that families are being devastated, and a city and agency are being shaken to the core. Finally, I am troubled by knowing that our *own* protectors will bear the burden of unfair criticisms during this challenging time because of the actions, and inactions, of a few who do **not** represent the many.

I am proud of my history of vocally, and strongly, supporting and lobbying on behalf of our protectors. Those who chose this path are deserving of our support and appreciation.

I have not wavered in my commitment in this area. However, the behaviors of the police that we watched on the MPD video make every future debate an uphill battle.

The actions, and inactions, of those officers were nothing short of disgraceful for the law enforcement community and will take decades to undo the damage that was done.

This is difficult to write and to read, but it is the hard truth.

I do *not* pass judgment on the MPD or their leadership. That is not my role. I know they have an ongoing balance of struggles that they do their best to work through. However, every good cop, and every decent human being, knows this was improper conduct. **We have an obligation to stand up for what is right.**

As an administrator who is also a career “Cop”, I know to wait for the facts to come out. I understand that there is almost always “More to the story”. I also understand that most critical incidents involve a protector who has to make split second decisions in which a bad choice might cost them their lives.

That is not the case in this incident.

The outcome was not an accident or an unintended result of a moment of adrenaline filled haste.

An officer *chose* to engage in prolonged and intentional misconduct. He *chose* to disregard the safety and constitutional rights of another human being. He *chose* to sacrifice his community trust as a result. Other officers *chose* to not intervene.

Whether the officer’s actions are determined to be the cause of death, *or not*, the actions were clearly wrong.

While I typically avoid politically charged material on my FaceBook page, I wanted *you* to know what I wrote and where I stand.

I think this is necessary if we are to all operate as a team and be on the same page. Below is a copy of my post related to the incident:



**Sheriff James Stuart**

Published by James Stuart [?] · 20 hrs · ⚙

I write this note as your community partner, fortunate to be a community leader, and honored to be elected as your sheriff:

Like you, I was sickened today as I watched the video of the police incident in Minneapolis. While I trust that justice will be served, it cannot undo the damage that has been done to the family, the community and the agency’s reputation. It may also play out poorly on a much larger scale if we don’t choose patience and peace.

This will reflect negatively on law enforcement nationally even though the VAST majority of our law enforcement professionals don’t deserve to have ANY attachment to such horrific acts. The majority remain noble heroes who do a difficult job with pride and honor. I ask that the community embrace this concept and that our professional law enforcement protectors continue to stand strong during this difficult time.

While it’s ok for us all to be angry and disappointed, I ask that everyone stand together for unity and peace as we await justice.

We are all in this together.

We are all in this together...

You’ve heard me say that before. I say it because it could *not* be more true.

When we win, we ALL win. When we lose, we ALL lose. That is why it is so important to eliminate liabilities and embrace doing the right thing.

We are fortunate though! The Anoka County Sheriff’s office has a reputation for excellence. We have great community relationships and regional partnerships.

We have model policies, cutting edge programs and training and clear expectations of each other.

That does not happen by accident. It has happened because *each one* of you understands that others have laid down a firm foundation for us to keep building upon.

As important, **we** do *not* take the charge to keep improving lightly.

The Anoka County Sheriff's Office is an *office wide* team of professionals who embrace that "**Honor, sacrifice & pride**" are not just words; they are core values that we *live* by.

Our mission statement, "**To protect and serve the community in a manner that preserves the public trust**" is the center of our decisions, our actions and our behaviors.

Without the public trust, there is little reason for us to exist.

As we move forward, we should *re-commit* to doing the right thing and to *pushing* each other to be better.

We must embrace empathy as a tool, and justice as a measurement.

We need to understand that we are not alone; but instead, we are **all** in this together.

I continue to be **very** proud of our team and encourage you to stay the course during this difficult time of added scrutiny and attacks.

Stay safe, watch your six and keep doing the right thing.

I appreciate each and every one of you!

In service,

**James Stuart**

**Sheriff**

**Anoka County**

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