

Statement from the Beaufort Police Chief

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Official Statement re: the Death of Tyre Nichols

Members of the Beaufort Community:

My heart is heavy tonight as I once again come before you to speak about another tragic death at the hands of law enforcement. There are no words that can ease the pain, anger, and heartbreak you are feeling. I feel them too. The death of Tyre Nichols was senseless and completely preventable. There are no excuses for the actions and complete disregard shown for the life of Tyre. Police Chiefs across the country have made the same pledge to their communities that I have made to you; that it is my duty and honor to keep you safe and protect you. With this pledge comes a great responsibility; that is to ensure we have the staff in place who embrace their role as community caretakers and protectors and promise to place the utmost importance on the sanctity of human life. What happened to Tyre was a direct result of what happens when individuals within the department intentionally refuse to honor that promise.

What I witnessed tonight was a grotesque display of power in the hands of individuals abusing the sacred role they held in their community. This was obvious and the consequences of their actions were swift with termination and subsequent criminal prosecution. The death of George Floyd brought the law enforcement profession, our values, and our training into a national conversation. The demonstrations and protests that followed paved the way for meaningful conversations and a renewed commitment to ensure that law enforcement professionals understand the awesome responsibility bestowed upon us. There have been sweeping legislative initiatives to address training, accountability, and transparency. While progress has been made, that is of no comfort to the family of Tyre Nichols who find themselves standing before us completely devastated with more questions than answers.

This is deeper than a training issue. It is deeper than a transparency issue. This is a human issue. This demands an examination and understanding as to whether you have men and women of sound character willing to make the right choice, every day, no matter what. As your Chief, I consistently review the work, actions, and character of my officers. You deserve that. I deserve that. I do not take my responsibility to you lightly and neither do my staff. The community dialogue and demonstrations held here locally in Beaufort following the death of George Floyd provided insight and a common ground, that we all demand an end to law

enforcement’s use of excessive force. The light and hope that broke through these conversations was the understanding that those actions, those types of officers, and that abusive culture does not exist here. It will never be tolerated and that is a promise.

As we move forward, please pray for Tyre’s family, the Memphis community, and each other as we begin the healing process. My pledge to you remains the same: we see you, we hear you, and we are blessed to be of service to you.

In your service...

Paul Burdette, Chief of Police

Supporting Documents

tyre_nichols.pdf 176.25 KB