

## **Nation in Distress**

This may be the most difficult column to write since I started writing almost five years ago. Our nation is again in a time of crisis. After viewing videos, I believe that Derek Chauvin, Minneapolis police officer caused the death of George Floyd. Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for almost 9 minutes and almost 3 minutes after Floyd ceased to be responsive. Autopsies from an independent doctor and an updated autopsy from the medical examiner both determined that Floyd was dead when the ambulance arrived. Chauvin and three other officers with him were fired by the Minneapolis chief of police. Chauvin has since been charged with third degree murder and manslaughter. Protests, some peaceful and some violent erupted across our nation, including our neighbors in Fargo. Why is writing about this difficult for me? It is because I do not have the experiences in my life to know what discrimination feels like. I grew up in an all-while, all-Lutheran, mostly Scandinavian community of farmers. The only people I even saw that looked different from us is when the Grand Forks Air Base basketball team played an exhibition game in our tiny gym. During my four years in the Air Force, I worked with people of all races and many religions from all over the country. Yet I never experienced discrimination based on my skin color. I like to think that I treat all people the same, but I also know that is not true. As with nearly everyone else, I have some biases. But, I'm working on them.

Following the protest and some property destruction in Fargo, I listened to the press conference or our local leaders. I am very proud to call Johnathan Judd my mayor. Mayor Judd called for a very honest and candid conversation about racism in our country and in our community. Judd mingled with the crown of protestors, answered many questions and most importantly listened. Judd challenged the other leaders to do a better job of listening. Questions he heard included Why aren't there more of us in the police force? Why aren't there more of us in leadership? Judd challenged the other community leaders to respond as a group. Judd also said that he has a dilemma because he is now part of the leadership and not all protesters trust him. He called on the community to become active and involved in finding solutions. Judd believes that we as a community can come together and find solutions. He challenged us to come together as a community and we will make progress.

I am issuing a call to all of our Veterans' organizations and to individual Veterans to become part of the solution. As part of our training, we were taught to identify the problem, find solutions and get it done. Let's use that approach in finding solutions for our community, our state and our country.