

OPINION

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BLACK LIVES MATTER



By Co-Publisher
Kaitlyn Clark

Black lives matter. And no – that does not mean they matter more than any other life or that they are the only lives that matter. Instead, it means that black lives *should* matter, and current events suggest they often don't.

If your response to "black lives matter" is "all lives matter" or "blue lives matter", consider this:

Bob and his friends go out for dinner. They all order food. Thirty minutes later, everyone at the table has their food except for Bob.

Bob says, "Bob deserves food."

And the waiter says, "All people deserve food. Waiters deserve food."

While it is true that all people deserve to eat, it doesn't change the fact that Bob still doesn't have his meal. It is okay that Bob is upset he never received his meal and has brought it to the attention of others.

It is also okay for a movement to focus on a specific group. The Breast Cancer Society gets significant support every October, but that doesn't mean prostate, lung, skin, or any other kind of cancer is less important. Save the Rainforest campaigns are common, but those campaigns are not insinuating that the rainforest is the only habitat worth preserving.

If you had the thought that Bob didn't destroy property or get violent over the loss of his food, consider that you might be prioritizing the wrong thing when looking at the protests currently ongoing in the US. A man lost his life, he wasn't the first, and he won't be the last if nothing changes. The violence that has arisen around initially peaceful protests – and let's keep in mind that the violence has come from both sides – does not negate the original problem. I will not be discussing the protests specifically at this time, as I feel it is ultimately a separate discussion. For now, consider this:

- Black people represented 24% of the 1,099 people killed by police officers in America in 2019, but make up only 13% of the total population.

- Black Americans are almost twice as likely as Hispanics and almost three times as likely as white people to be killed by a police officer (based on deaths per 1 million population). Of those who died at the hands of an officer, black people were unarmed 1.3 times more than white people.

Some of you may have had a thought along the lines of, "Well, it's a matter of who is committing crimes. If you committed a crime and/or fail to follow the directions of police, it's not anyone else's fault you got hurt."

There are a few issues to unpack with that thought.

1) Comparisons of violent crime rates to rates of death by police officers show no correlation in American cities. For instance, Buffalo, NY has a violent crime rate of 12 per 1,000

and had zero deaths by police officers from 2013-16; comparatively, Orlando, FL has a violent crime rate of 9 per 1,000 but had 13 deaths by police in that time. Similarly, in the same study of America's 50 largest cities from 2013-2018, Detroit has one of the highest violent crime rates but is 45th out of 50 cities for rates of police killings, while Oklahoma City has the highest rate of police killings and lands around the middle for violent crime rates. (Source: mappingpoliceviolence.org)

2) A police officer should not be playing the role of judge and executioner. While there may be times when an officer arguably must use force, their goal should always be to protect citizens, including those they are arresting. Those being detained or arrested should be considered innocent until proven guilty. This is the foundation of a fair justice system.

3) People may be uncooperative for a variety of reasons. While some may simply be aggressive, others may not fully comprehend the situation due to mental delays, illness, or impairment. Additionally, some may simply be afraid and revert to a fight or flight response. Citizens are not trained to be arrested, but police are trained to handle uncooperative people.

4) Let's apply that initial thought to the most recent incident that has brought this to everyone's attention: George Floyd. Floyd was accused of using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Scenario One, he knowingly used a counterfeit bill: if you feel a man deserves to die over \$20, then I doubt you will ever see reason and there's not much point in you reading further. I will not argue why a human being should not lose their life over \$20.

Scenario Two, the bill he used was counterfeit but he did not know: this scenario would mean a simple mistake on Floyd's part led to his death.

Scenario Three, the store employee was incorrect, and the bill was fine: this scenario would mean a simple mistake on the employee's part led to Floyd's death.

"But if he resisted the police," I hear some people saying to these scenarios. Let's go over the report of events, which is corroborated by video of the event.

8:08 p.m. – Officers Alexander Keung and Thomas Lane arrive having been told by a store employee that Floyd is in a vehicle outside and potentially intoxicated. Floyd is told to exit the vehicle and is handcuffed without resistance.

8:14 p.m. – When police attempt to put him in the squad car, Floyd stiffens and falls to the ground. He tells officers he is claustrophobic and does not want to enter the vehicle.

8:17 p.m. – Officers Derek Chauvin and Tou Thao arrive.

8:19 p.m. – Chauvin pulls Floyd away from the car and onto the pavement, facedown and still handcuffed. Kueng holds down Floyd's back, Lane holds down his legs, and Chauvin places his left knee on Floyd's neck. Thao retrieves a hobble restraint from the squad car, but the officers opt not to use it and remain in place.

8:21 p.m. – Bleeding is noticed from Floyd's mouth. The call is upgraded to a request for emergency medical assistance.

Floyd tells officers repeatedly that he cannot breathe and once says, "I'm about to die." Lane asks if they should roll Floyd to his side, but Chauvin responds that Floyd is "staying put where we got him."

8:24 p.m. – Floyd stops moving as he loses consciousness after stating that he could not breathe at least a dozen times. Multiple bystanders plead with the officers to stop, with Thao dismissing their concerns. Chauvin pulls out his capsaicin spray and gestures with it to those watching.

8:25 p.m. – Floyd appears to stop breathing. Lane asks again if they should roll him on his side. Kueng checks for a pulse and says, "I couldn't find one."

8:27 p.m. – An ambulance arrives and paramedics check for Floyd's pulse.

8:28 p.m. – Chauvin now removes his knee from Floyd's neck at the request of the paramedic. Floyd is transported to hospital.

9:25 p.m. – Floyd is pronounced dead after first responders and emergency room staff spent nearly an hour trying to revive him.

Fact: Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, with Floyd being unconscious for approximately 3 minutes at the end.

Police should be the best of us. It's an incredibly hard job that requires specific and ongoing training and puts the officer at risk of physical or mental harm. There are many great officers who are doing their best with the resources and system they are given to work within.

That being said, there are problems in the system. We need to look at those problems and work on solutions. Good officers need to be a part of that solution; they need to step up and step in when they see a problem. Officers should be held accountable for their actions. Police departments need to invest in better training, particularly on dealing with the public and avoiding biases, better mental health resources to handle the stresses of the job, and more stringent psychological testing to weed out problem officers.

Those problems also don't stop with the police department, nor do they stop at the border. Racism and discrimination of all kinds exist everywhere, including right here in Haldimand.

I encourage our readers to engage more actively with this topic. Research online and read books on the topic, particularly by those who have a first-hand perspective. Try to recognize and understand whatever unconscious biases you may have and work to overcome them. Discuss what you see, hear, and feel with your family and friends.

Sweeping these issues under the rug will not help and ignoring them because you don't feel their effects is a disservice to your fellow man.

Change can happen. It has happened in the past, with the end of segregation, with legislation put in place to protect citizens, and so on. But there is still work to be done – and you can help.

We must aggressively plan for recovery

By MPP
Toby Barrett



It has been over four months since Ontario's first case of coronavirus, and our focus now is getting businesses up and running – and people back to work – in a safe and responsible manner.

Reopening Ontario is the toughest balancing act we've ever had. My staff constantly hears conflicting opinions; some are adamant we must open immediately, and there are those fearful of opening too quickly.

Across Ontario, 402,800 jobs were lost in March and 689,200 in April. Those numbers underscore the significant impact of COVID-19, and serve as a stark reminder of the personal impact of this crisis, in addition to those whose health this virus has impacted. The people behind those numbers are on our minds as we focus on creating jobs and fostering growth. The timing of our recovery continues to be informed by the advice of medical experts, and the best practices of places previously hit by COVID. We are also looking to economists, businesses and labour leaders, workers, families, and entrepreneurs for advice.

We want every Ontarian to get back to work as soon as it is safe, with a clear path to economic recovery that keeps people protected and healthy. But people want us to be cautious – a message that I hear through my office and delivering masks door-to-door in towns like Hagersville and Jarvis. We don't want the hard work and sacrifice of people in Haldimand and Norfolk, and 14.5 million Ontarians, to be for nothing. That's why we are taking a gradual, staged approach to opening things up. Thanks to the perseverance of people and businesses, we can start to carefully ease restrictions, get businesses open, and people back to work.

On May 19, we entered the first stage of our reopening process. Seasonal businesses like marinas, trailer parks, nurseries and golf courses

are open – as are certain retail stores, with a street entrance as opposed to an entrance from a mall. Health and medical services have been allowed to resume. Construction sites are getting back up and running. We have also provided public health guidance to keep families, employees and customers safe and healthy – with more than 90 workplace safety guidelines. It remains critical that we continue to maintain physical distancing or wear a mask, wash our hands frequently, use hand sanitizers, and keep commonly used surfaces clean. We should also get tested if we think we have come in contact with the virus, even if we have no symptoms. People are compassionate, patient, and careful – I see it at the door and hear it on the telephone – which is why we have steadily been making progress.

COVID-19 is an extraordinary threat to the health and economy of Ontario – the greatest we've seen in our lifetimes. It requires extraordinary measures from all of us because we're all in this together regardless of where we live on the planet. The irony is we're often in this together while working remotely. Between our responsibilities in Haldimand Norfolk and our work as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, our office has often been around the clock interacting with farmers, business people, public servants, and citizens. Our days go from teleconferences, to iPhones, to webinars, to Zoom meetings. The work is satisfying and necessary as we work to protect people while planning Ontario's recovery.

Editors note: This column was submitted before June 8, 2020, when the Ontario government announced that it is moving forward with a regional approach to Stage 2 of reopening the province. In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and local health officials, the government eased restrictions in communities where they deemed it was safe to do so. Haldimand was not included in the list of health unit regions allowed to move into Stage 2. However, effective Friday, June 12, 2020 at 12:01 a.m., the province increased the limit on social gatherings from five to 10 people across the province, regardless of whether a region has moved to Stage 2.

Notices to readers

Seeking Spanish bibles for migrant workers

A reader contacted us and mentioned that migrant workers affected by COVID-19 at Scottlyn Group in Norfolk are looking for Spanish bibles.

If you have any or know where they can find Spanish bibles, please contact Nancy Palma at 647-978-3272 or by email at graceful.apparel@outlook.com.

Clarification

In the story *Paying tribute to farmers and truckers* on Page 7 in the June 4, 2020 edition, we'd like to clarify that Lisa's husband Freddie is one of the owners of the family-run businesses Mattice Farms & Trucking, along with Mattice Elevators.

We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

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