

To whom it may concern:

My venture began the weekend of June 26, 2020. My goal was to distribute 100 self-purchased yard signs along the main thoroughfares of Madeira. The signs read, "Thank You to our Madeira Police." My task was completed by dinner on Sunday. I made it clear that I represented no organization or political party. "It represents nothing more or nothing less than what is printed on the sign."

In my practice of 36 years, I've had a dozen or more police officers as patients. As I've gotten to know them, we've spoken about our occupations, families and various other matters. These are good, kind people. As a resident of Madeira since 1992, I feel the same about the Madeira Police Department. If police officers would comport themselves as these officers, we'd be in a better situation than we are today. They put their lives on the line everyday for the safety and good of the community. As citizenry, when the police are being painted with a broad brush of negativity, I believe the very least we can do is to have their backs and come to their defense IF they're doing a good job. Other departments should emulate them. A sign of gratitude was my public effort to convey this.

I've seen most of the current 7 police officers in my practice since fall, 2019. Low police morale is a common topic over the past few years. As you can see, I've been contemplating my sign venture for quite some time. I planned to line the streets with them for Madeira's annual July 4th parade.

Now that you know the time sequence for my plans and my intentions, let me continue with my experiences once I completed the sign displays.

From Saturday, June 27 through Wednesday, July 1, the following transpired. As early as Saturday afternoon, through social media, my mission had been co-opted and used as a platform for various political views. Hundreds of comments were made, questioning the timing, my intentions, and implying my endeavor might be "anti" this or that. One reply was, it's good to "know your enemy."

Numerous signs were stolen, a few were defaced, and other signs were taken down for unbeknownst reasons. As a response to the anger and dissent, Madeira Police Chief Dave Schaefer posted a message calling for unity.

On Wednesday, July 1 an article was written in the Cincinnati Enquirer in regards to the signs as it relates to the Racial Equity Initiative approved by Madeira City Council on June 8. This is intended to develop a community action plan for racial equity. In the article, Madeira Mayor Nancy Spencer states many in the community felt the signs were a tactical response in opposition to the Initiative, and suggested a "Blue Lives Matter" vs. a "Black Lives Matter" conflict. She also asserted, "for many, it opened a divisive argument over intent and racial tensions in the community."

My immediate reaction on everything that was occurring was that of disbelief. This was a lot of acrimony and conjecture over a simple act of appreciation! I soon realized this whole situation was a microcosm of the world we live in today...we're all bunkered down in our ideological camps in conflict with one another, YET, WE DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER IN PERSON IN HOPES OF RESOLVING OUR ISSUES.

My name was "out there" in social media, but no one making accusations or assertions contacted me. Had they done so, they would have known of my intentions as I noted in this letter. Had they contacted me, they would have known this was in the planning stage months in advance of the Initiative. Therefore, it did not represent a "Blue Lives Matter" vs. a "Black Lives Matter" conflict. Don't let the pundits (media, politicians, etc.) put us in such confined compartments that we can't balance multiple ideas at the same time. We can honor good law enforcement and abhor bad conduct/discrimination at the same time.

I saw this open-mindedness as I distributed the signs. What a wonderful experience. It renewed my faith in the goodness of people. While not a scientific study, out of 108 people that I engaged, 100 accepted, and only 8 declined the sign. The overwhelming vast majority saw the sign for what it was. I believe this is because I spoke to them in person. They could look me in the eye and know that I was sincere in my intentions. But even more hopeful were the conversations I had. No one expressed anger or hostility. Quite the contrary, several dozen wanted to talk and expressed their desire that matters get better. Just like in any other segment of society, they felt we need to weed out racism/discrimination where it exists. Most were optimistic that we can accomplish this if we just converse with one another in a civil manner. Don't vilify one another as the enemy without getting to know them. We all have different experiences in our lives that form the basis for our opinions and beliefs. We need to explore each other's experiences and respect how this can lead to a difference of opinion. By doing so, hopefully we can at least respect these differences. From there, quite possibly we can begin to trust one another and initiate positive changes.

I recognize my experiences with the police have been good. Perhaps I have a sort of "bias" for the police. Others may have had bad experiences. My good friend and college roommate (who happened to be Black), once told me he's very cautious when driving in fear he's more likely to be stopped by the police. He never elaborated. Whether this occurred to him or was just his perception, to him it is reality. We need to acknowledge these different experiences if we are to solve or at least better societal problems. We can only do this if we come together face to face.

Perhaps it begins with a single issue like law enforcement. And, perhaps, it begins at the local level. Why not Madeira, Ohio? I would welcome talking to others of a different persuasion. Continually talking to like-minded people is like an echo chamber. Nothing is accomplished under those circumstances. True change and advancement is brought about by differences in thought. I've spoken with the police in my practice and in Madeira. I'm sure Chief Schaefer would welcome your feedback, especially if it differs from mine.