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Illinois' Voice of Professional Law Enforcement

Officers 2016-2017

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Statement of Steven R. Casstevens President, Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police

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Detective Benjamin Marconi of the San Antonio, TX Police Department was assassinated in front of his own police station on Sunday, November 20th. Less than a week before the majority of Americans will gather together to celebrate and give thanks for life, love, and family, the Marconi family is forced to turn their attention to burying Benjamin: a son, brother, husband, father and grandfather.

I begin this statement talking about Detective Marconi, as opposed to issuing a standard press release “on behalf of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police” or “as a police chief,” because the dreadful issue of overt, concerted, and directed violence against law enforcement officers across the United States of America is personal. And it must stop.

I am compelled to speak. I am compelled to demand outrage from the American public. I am compelled to demand that the media gives this issue the attention it deserves – because the righteous indignation that has been afforded to countless other incidents of tragedy has not been bestowed on the law enforcement officers of this nation who have fallen at the hands of hatred, depravity, and wanton explicit acts of anti-police sentiment and murder. Detective Marconi was murdered. He did not die in a heroic act of lifesaving. He was writing a traffic ticket and someone shot him in the head...twice.

Despite my visceral urge not to, I had to turn on the news and tune into what passes for news these days – social media. Imagine my horror when I came across a video on Facebook of a group of young people in Austin, Texas over this past weekend, chanting, “Fuck the police. What’s better than nine dead cops? Ten dead cops! What’s better than ten dead cops? Eleven dead cops!”

Those are vile, vitriolic, violent words. I want the media to print them, to show them, to showcase them and to broadcast them from the rooftops. Because this is the society we live in right now. Chanting for the outright murder of police officers is not protesting, it's riot-inciting and absolute terrorism. There is a peaceful process for speaking your mind. This is not it.

Don't bleep out the expletives, Mr. and Mrs. Media, fearing the safe space of our country's fragile young ears. These are the mouths, lungs, and hearts connected to many ears. If the nature of this message is palatable to you and the sentiment appeals to your exploitation, let the freedom of the press and the expression of the American public cry forth in its purest and most uncensored form. Americans are screaming, "Fuck the police" in the middle of the day, the same weekend that an honorable man was ferociously slaughtered in what should have been the most reasonable boundaries of safety – behind a badge, in a police car, in front of a police station, in the United States of America.

Does human decency remain anywhere? Have we watched the last thinning shreds of civility fall to the winds of indulgent, selfish, capricious cowards who do not speak for social justice but rather, act brutally and sadistically for their own petty, indulgent crusades? Is there no safe quarter for the guardians and protectors, who at times are also forced to be warriors, who stand sentinel over our homes every day, night, weekend, and holiday, through onslaughts of weather, at the cost of personal and family time?

I am outraged. Yes, as a police chief and as a representative leader of my state, but also because I am a human being who is watching other human beings being targeted, assaulted, maimed, disabled, and killed because they wear a badge that pledges their dedication to keeping communities across this great nation safe. At this time in our country, more than ever, we must stop talking about theoretical common ground and find it...and stand on it...with each other and against the rage, wrath, and perceived vengeance of a vocal group who seek to bring great harm to our American way of life.

I am tired of grieving. I am weary of sending condolences. I am physically sickened at the thought of where our nation stands as a people in the face of a social contract between citizens and policing that has stood, perhaps imperfectly, for hundreds of years.

I refuse to accept the normalization of violence against police. Targeting, harming, and killing law enforcement officers is a vicious, calculated act of domestic terrorism. It is not to be entertained, much less tolerated, by a nation that lives, breathes, and thrives on liberty and freedom from tyranny. Every decent citizen of this country should demand that this stop. Where is your voice? Where are your letters to the editor? Where are the media that so quickly plaster stories over and over about questionable officer-involved shootings before all the facts are confirmed? Are you not outraged? Will you not give equal time to senseless killings of police officers and chantings for the killing of more?

- Detective Benjamin Marconi, San Antonio, TX Police – murdered while sitting in his police car – 11-20-16.
- Deputy Commander Patrick Carothers, United States Marshal – shot and killed while serving a warrant – 11-18-16.
- Deputy Sheriff Dennis Wallace, Stanislaus County, CA – shot and killed investigating a suspicious person – 11-13-16.
- Officer Darrin Reed, Show Low, AZ Police – shot and killed investigating a suspicious person – 11-08-16.
- Deputy Daryl Smallwood, Peach County, GA – shot and killed investigating a neighbor dispute – 11-06-16.
- Sergeant Patrick Sondron, Peach County, GA – shot and killed investigating a neighbor dispute – 11-06-16.
- Officer Cody Brotherson, West Valley, UT Police – struck and killed by criminals fleeing in a stolen car – 11-06-16.
- Sergeant Paul Tuozzolo, New York City Police – shot and killed responding to a robbery call – 11-04-16.
- Sergeant Anthony Beminio, Des Moines, IA Police – shot and killed in an ambush attack – 11-02-16.
- Officer Justin Martin, Urbandale, IA Police – shot and killed in an ambush attack – 11-02-16.

The officers listed above, sons, brothers, fathers and grandfathers, were murdered in the line of duty, just this month. This reflects a rate of one officer murdered every two days in this country. This should shock the conscience of every American. Again, I ask you, where is your outrage? I ask you to grieve for the families of these officers. I also ask you to grieve for all families of the 128 police officers who gave their lives in the line of duty so far this year. I ask you to reflect upon the 20,789 police officers, whose names are etched in granite at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC, who gave their lives to protect this country. They did it for you. It has to stop. That's what the American public, community after community, leader after leader, elected official after elected official, and person after person must say about attacks on law enforcement. It has to stop.

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