

'Worry about yourself!'

The warning offered to the North News editor just before he was arrested while covering protests in Brooklyn Center

Story and photos by Harry Colbert, Jr., Editor-in-Chief

Authoritarianism:

of, relating to, or favoring blind submission to authority

Totalitarianism:

1: centralized control by an autocratic authority

2: the political concept that the citizen should be totally subject to an absolute state authority

My shoulder remained sore for several days.

That was the lasting physical pain from being arrested/detained and handcuffed April 14 in Brooklyn Center while covering the protests following the police killing of unarmed 20-year-old Daunte Wright. The mental and spiritual pain is far worse and won't heal any time soon.

Regarding what I was falsely arrested/detained for, the stated charges were unlawful assembly and violating curfew. As everyone who has witnessed the video (on my personal Facebook page) can see, I verbally identified myself as press and had on several highly visible press passes and my business card.

The true reason I was arrested is because according to the arresting officer (from either Golden Valley or Hopkins, according to a state internal affairs investigation into the incident), "That's what happens when you wanna be a tough guy!" So, yes, I was arrested for being a "tough guy."

What made me so tough?

Minutes after an announced curfew in the city began a massive deployment of police and military ensnarled both protesters and bystanders nearly two blocks away from the city's police department. As seen in the live video, an older gentleman whose first language is not English was stuck in the onslaught and was asking me where he could go to get out. So, in trying to offer a fellow human being directions, I was immediately confronted by police and told to move, to which I complied, but I let the officers know that the gentleman driving was just asking for help and I was at-

tempting to offer assistance. It was at that point the officers began banging on the man's car with batons. Let me state this again ... police officers began assaulting the man's car with their batons. How's that for a de-escalation tactic?

Yeah, I'm a journalist, but I'm a human being first. I could not sit idly by when witnessing a wrong right in front of my eyes. All it took was that frightened and confused man to lurch his car forward and the story would have been he attempted to run them over and justification for another death.

I yelled at the officers about their actions and told them I was worried for that man's safety and I was told (as can be witnessed on the video), "Don't worry about him worry about yourself," to which my reply was, "Oh, I'm going to absolutely worry about him."

And I meant it. I have zero regrets. Not on my watch.

I saw witness after witness of George Floyd's death testify during Derek Chauvin's trial and almost each one said they wished they had done something to stop it. I wasn't going to have that unfair burden hanging over me.

I complied with every order from the officers (again, as seen on the video) and still I was arrested because I had the temerity, audacity, to speak up for a fellow human and to then ask such simple questions as, "Where can I stand? Which way do you want me to move?"

And as even when I was being a "good little boy" and did what I was told, I was still arrested because I was trying to walk away. Yup, trying to walk away will get you arrested. Well, it will if you have a voice and decide to use it.

After several minutes of being questioned and showing my media credentials to multiple officers (showing as in telling them where they were because my arms remained bound behind my back) I was eventually cut loose of my zip-tie restraints and told I could go about my business ...

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From behind a fence, police from multiple jurisdictions throughout the state train tear gas and rubber bullet guns on protesters outside of the Brooklyn Center Police Department.



Reminiscent of scenes from this past summer, plumes of chemical smoke cloud the night sky in Brooklyn Center following the unrest as a result of the police killing of 20-year-old Daunte Wright.



Throngs of police faceoff with protesters in a residential neighborhood outside of the Brooklyn Center Police Department.

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Rucker continued, stating that the pool will be a beacon to show Minneapolis in a brighter light and help build up the community once again.

"It's (Olympic trials pool) contributing to the overall fight for social justice, economic justice and social change," Rucker said. "We're trying to collaborate and add to those resources for permanent close proximity for North Minneapolis residents."

Scott Seroka, communications and media relation lead for V3, said the pool will also bring experience and a learning opportunity to the Northside, which in-turn will help save lives.

Seroka said the risk of death goes down 80 percent after a month of swimming lessons and it is the right step to break the fear and generational barriers that are present in Black communities.

"We talk a lot about swimming and fear of water being generational and also addressing not only children, but adults who can then inspire their children and break

that generational cycle of that fear," Seroka said.

Cycle of fear

V3 board member Isaac De Souza said breaking that cycle is important for current and future generations and having the resource in places that lack them moves the community in the right direction.

"My parents didn't expose me to water, and I didn't know how to swim," De Souza said. "I think that's incredibly important because it's a life skill that is a necessity in Minneapolis and being able to create an opportunity to enjoy those lakes, enjoy those parties, enjoy the pools, and wherever you swim."

For years, in many cities throughout the nation it was illegal for Blacks to have access to public pools and lakes.

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Wright's parents with an American flag that flew at half-mast over the U.S. Capitol in honor of the slain 20-year-old.

Also in attendance were families ravaged by police (or pseudo police) violence. They included Valarie Castile, the mother of Philando Castile, killed by a Falcon Heights police officer during a traffic stop, the family of George Floyd, the mother of Oscar Grant, Grant, who was killed in Oakland by an officer who, similar to Daunte Wright, claimed to have mistook a gun for a taser, the family of Emmitt Till, the 14-year-old civil rights martyr killed in 1954 by a white lynch mob in Money, Miss. for supposedly whistling at a white woman and the family of Jamar Clark, 24, killed in 2015 by Minneapolis police.

Sharpton, Crump, Omar and Sen. Amy Klobuchar all called on the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. If passed, the act would set federal standards for policing by lowering the criminal intent standard from willful to knowing or reckless to convict a law enforcement officer for misconduct in a federal prosecution, limits qualified immunity as a defense to liability in a private civil action against a law enforcement officer or state correctional officer,

and authorizes the Department of Justice to issue subpoenas in investigations of police departments for a pattern or practice of discrimination.

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the business of documenting the actions of the evening. But I was too shaken to effectively report that evening.

I'm still not good. Not good at all. That night when I got home I couldn't stop shaking. But know what else I couldn't stop doing? Standing up to injustice and being there for my people.

So, on the evening of the Derek Chauvin verdict I went back out to Brooklyn Center to again report. After all, I'm a journalist. Our job is to shine light in the darkest of places.

Much of what is written here originally appeared on my personal Facebook page and was written the day following my arrest.

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