

Joint Statement of Mr. Darryl Jackson, Jr., Sheriff David Reynolds, and Mayor Jon Costas

This statement has been developed through a collaborative dialogue. In it we offer some reflections on what happened the evening of August 29th, 2015. We moreover seek to bring closure to this episode by pursuing true reconciliation, which is more than simply the papering over of differences.

Darryl Jackson's Statement: I have a tremendous amount of respect for officers of the law. I went to school in suburban Detroit, where I interacted with the police daily and was always taught to be respectful of those trying to do a difficult job. The schools I attended gave me the opportunity to be coached and mentored by police officers, whom I respect greatly to this day. I even have family members who are police officers. I am a law-abiding citizen, who trusts in the Lord and prays for life, liberty and strength to love my neighbors as myself. But I am not perfect. On the evening of August the 29th, 2015, my flaws presented themselves in a way that I was unaware was even possible. During my interaction with Officer Lucas and the other officers on the gang task force, I was overcome with fear, which led me to act in ways that I regret.

In the midst of my fear, I was not the best version of myself. I was so scared that I did not even register the officer's instruction to take my hands out of my pockets; I am sorry that my nerves took over in the moment. I was afraid not only for myself, but for my friends in the car. I just wanted to see my mom. I am fortunate in that she taught me better. My mother taught me to respect others irrespective of their position, prestige or their attitude towards me. She also taught me to remain calm even when everyone else is losing their cool. In these areas especially I did not do well that evening and for that reason I want to convey my sincere apologies to Officer Tim Lucas, Sheriff David Reynolds and the other members of the gang taskforce. I have learned much already from this experience, which has left me eager to help other people see that it is on all of us to stop the cycle of disrespect. I humbly accept this as my responsibility.

David Reynolds' Statement: I would first like to express my thanks to Darryl Jackson for this statement and I gladly accept his apology. The truth is, we know that we can do better too. I have always believed that every interaction with citizens is important and that my Department has an obligation to be tactically sound, critically aware, and constructively engaged with the communities we serve. We are dedicated to Porter County and strive for excellence in everything we do.

I have had the opportunity to reflect further on the interaction between the gang taskforce and Mr. Jackson, as well as on the different public responses that followed in its wake. I have seen how incidents such as this one have the power to divide our great community. In order to heal the wound, perceived and real, I have engaged in dialogue with a great variety of people. As a result of these conversations, I have come to see that my officers must be better equipped to understand the ways that our own implicit biases inflect our work, as well as the ways that citizens' backgrounds impact their perceptions and experiences of law enforcement.

In the spirit of constant improvement and community betterment, I commit my department to quarterly dialogues. My department will participate in a series of dialogues with Porter County citizens over the course of the next year. We have much to learn from each other. In 2016, we will work with community partners to sponsor quarterly events designed to foster constructive conversations about vital issues in our communities. We will also institute implicit bias training within our department and promote it across Porter County police departments. These trainings will offer vital perspective on citizen-officer encounters and will have many benefits, one of which will be enhanced officer safety. We will continue our high level of transparency in order to strengthen trust within the community. I will continue to provide open access to all department policies and will annually post on the department's website information about stops and arrests aggregated by demographics. I will also convene a focus group annually to review polices and aggregated reports, with the purpose of making recommendations directly to me.

I want to close by stressing that the final goal of law enforcement is not the apprehension of criminals but rather the promotion of public safety while respecting the rights and dignity of all members of the community.

Jon Costas's Statement: The strength of a community is tested by its ability to work through tough issues in a spirit of understanding and respect. This joint statement is a shining example of that spirit. Both Sheriff Reynolds and Mr. Jackson deserve credit for finding a positive resolution to this matter. This has also been a learning experience for me in community policing, and I am pleased that our citizens have taken opportunities to express their concerns, as well as their appreciation for our talented and dedicated police officers throughout Porter County. I regret that my comments offended some within the law enforcement community.

As we move forward, we will find new ways to facilitate healthy and constructive dialogue across lines of difference. I am committed to advancing these vital conversations. We have a remarkably diverse and talented citizenry here in Valparaiso and in Porter County, and we benefit every day from the dedication, character, and sacrifice of law enforcement personnel whose efforts are essential to the flourishing of our communities. Together, we can and will lead by example, and through our efforts this city and this county will continue to be known as places of peace and prosperity for all people.

Darryl Jackson, Jr.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darryl Jackson, Jr.', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Sheriff David Reynolds

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheriff David Reynolds', with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Jon Costas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Costas', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.