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June 11, 2020
Washington, D.C.

Houston Mayor Turner Signs Executive Order

Enacting Restrictions on Houston Police Department, Council Budget Increases Police Funding

Yesterday, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, the mayor of our nation's fourth-largest city, signed an executive order that put restrictions on the Houston police officers. Mayor Turner's order is an endorsement of some of the measures in the current #8CantWait campaign. The new restrictions include requiring officers to deescalate, exhaust all other options before using deadly force. The order also mandates officers to intervene when they see misconduct of peer officers, forbids chokeholds, firing at moving vehicles. It requires all use of force to be reported to the department's Police Oversight Board. The order prohibits a no-knock warrant unless the chief or his designee approves them in writing.

Mayor Turner said that more police reforms are coming from Houston police. "This is not the end." Said the mayor, he gave credit to the peaceful marches and protestors in Houston saying, "In the absence of people that stood up, marched, protested, this would not be happening."

Houston Chief Art Acevedo pointed out that these measures will be codified in city law and a new chief cannot come in and ignore or undo these policies without going through the mayor's office.

Mayor Turner signed the law about an hour after the city council adopted a budget that slightly increased the funding for the Houston Police Department. Hence, Houston is not buying in or accepting the "Defund the Police" movement. While reforms are happening, the budget is increased.

Some cities like Los Angeles and New York are moving incrementally to reallocate funds from police to other agencies. And Minneapolis is going through a more transformational process of taking down its current police department to emerge with a new one.

Houston is one city where the protestors have embraced peace and Mayor Turner led the march with family members of George Floyd, the Houston native that was killed by the Minneapolis police officer by suffocating him with his knee in a chokehold way of stopping Mr. Floyd from breathing.

While last week Mayor Turner announced that he's appointing a task force to review HPD practices, he recognized that there's an immediate urgent call for changes to policy restrictions. At the end of the news conference yesterday, Mayor Turner said, "Nobody is taking a victory lap. We're simply saying we've taken another significant step and there are more steps that need to be taken to really advance the cause of justice."

The takeaway from Houston now is reform, reform, and reform and Houston rejects the defund the police as increases in the police budget is increased. No doubt, this picture and situation may change but today, reforms in Houston goes forward and the HPD police budget goes upward both at the same time.

Statues Are Tumbling Down, Removed, Beheaded and Defaced

Following the protests of the police killing in Minneapolis, in some cities here and abroad of historical figures involved in the slave trade and who fought within our own country against the United States to continue the practice of slavery which considered African Americans as subhuman are being tumbled down, destroyed, beheaded, and defaced.

In Richmond, Virginia last night, along the city's famed Monument Avenue, protestors tore down the statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Last week, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam ordered the huge iconic statue of Confederate General Rober E. Lee four blocks away from the Davis statue. A judge issued an injunction preventing the removal of the Lee edifice for 10 days. The protestors are not waiting.

In Portsmouth, Virginia, about 80 miles away, in Portsmouth protesters beheaded and then pulled down four statues.

At 12:30 a.m., the media and Boston Police Department were called to the scene to find the statue of Christoper Columbus beheaded. He now stands with folded arms and no head.

Across the Atlantic Ocean in Bristol, England, protestors pulled down the statue of Mr. Edward Colston and put it in the harbor. Coulson was a slave trader known to have transported 80,000 men, women, and children from Africa to the Americas.

In the Scottish capital Edinburgh, the 150-foot statue of Henry Dundas who delayed in 1792 the abolition of slavery for a more "gradual approach" was spraypainted and defaced with the words "George Floyd" and "BLM" for Black Lives Matter. Historians note that Dundas' amendment to the antislavery bill allowed slavery to exist 15 years longer than it otherwise would have been published.

In Brussels, Belgium, the statue of King Leopold II was doused with paint and burned, causing its removal to place unnamed on Tuesday of this week. Another statue of him was sprayed in Tervuren, near Brussels. An online petition against the King passed 64,000 signatories on Tuesday and its wording indicates that Leopold killed more than 10 million Congolese people in the 23-year reign over the colony which was Leopold's fiefdom in 1886 to 1908. Adam Hochschild, the U.S. author of the book "King Leopold's Ghost" indicates that half the population died during the rule of the Belgian monarch.

In London, amid anti-racism protests, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said more statues of "imperialist figures" could be removed throughout London. Even before Mayor Khan's new commission on statues, he announced got underway, officials in East London removed a statue of slave owner Robert Milligan.

The Bristol incident has sparked other calls to move statues of the past. It has revived calls for Oxford University to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, the Victorian Imperialist of South Africa who made a fortune in mines. Protestors showed up to do their business chanting, "Take it down" and now Oxford city officials are urging the college to apply for permission to remove the Rhodes statue and place it in a museum. In 2015, another large statue of Rhodes that stood since 1934 was removed from South Africa's University of Cape Town. And the Rhodes Scholarship in South Africa was renamed the Mandela Scholarships at that time.

Also, weekend protests in London defaced the statue of Winston Churchill, the wartime Prime Minister revered as the man who led the Brits to victory against

Nazi Germany, with words, "was a racist" painted on the Churchill statue. History shows that while he was a strong defender of the British empire, he still expressed racist views.

Mayor Khan suggested Winston Churchill's statute should not be moved. He said, "Nobody's perfect, whether it's Churchill, whether it's Gandhi, whether it's Malcolm X". He added that schools should teach their children about historical figures "warts and all." He went on to say, "But there are some statutes that are quite clear cut in my view, plantation owners are quite clear."

Meantime, back in the United States of America, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is calling for the removal of 11 Confederate statues from the Capitol's National Statutory Hall collection. She has sent a letter to the Joint Committee on the Library requesting that the Architect of the Capitol to remove statues of soldiers and officials who represented the Confederacy. She specifically mentioned Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President from Mississippi, and Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy from Georgia. Both men were charged with treason against the United States.

And in Louisville, the equestrian statue of Confederate Army Major John Castleman has stood overlooking Louisville's Cherokee Triangle for over 107 years. Through the years, there has been division around the controversial statue. Without announcing, on Monday at 6:00 am, the statue was removed to be placed in Cave Hill Cemetary where Castleman is interred.

Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer has expressed his position for removing the statue for years. Referring to recent the civil unrest and violence, Mayor Fischer said about the removal, "The events of the past weeks have shown clearly that it's not enough just to face our history – we've got to address its impact on our present. Too many people are suffering today because the promises of justice and equality enshrined in our Constitution are unfulfilled by a society that devalues African American lives and denies African Americans justice, opportunity, and equality. That's got to change."

Statues in a city can provoke the strongest feelings. We saw that when New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu removed the 16-foot-tall figure of Confederate General Robert E. Lee mounted on a 60-foot column in the center of Lee Circle near downtown New Orleans. It was controversial then and today since the

death of George Floyd and the national and global reaction on race has come to the forefront for change. The call for the removal of statues will intensify. Many mayors with controversial statues in cities of our nation and elsewhere in the world will be tested and called upon to lead their cities through this period of heightened emotions with peace and nonviolence.

Here's a Fact.

Today, the number of COVID-19 cases reported crossed the 2 million count with 2,071,489 infected persons in our nation. Deaths today totaled 115,291.

Texas set new records in hospitalizations on three consecutive days with a total of 2,153 infection hospitalizations of Texans yesterday. Texas was among the first to start reopening and Governor Greg Abbot moves forward with plans to raise occupancy limits for bars, restaurants, amusement parks, and other businesses.

Florida's seeing a new surge with more people testing positive and infected this past Saturday than any day in the past two months.

Arizona has reported an average of 1,000 people newly infected every day this week – the highest per capita rate in the United States.

20,000 to 25,000 people are being infected each day and 800 to 1,000 people are dying every day in June of 2020.

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