



Statements by Santa Fe Law Enforcement Leadership

APRIL 19, 2021

Mayor Webber, Police Chief Padilla, Director of Health and Safety Ochoa Respond to Guilty Verdict in George Floyd Murder Case

Mayor Alan Webber: Today's verdict is an important but incomplete step on the long march to justice and racial equity in our country. It doesn't bring back George Floyd or undo the pain that his murder brought to his family or the community. My heart is forever with the family of George Floyd, of Emmett Till, and of all of those who have lost loved ones to the terrible plague of racism.

The verdict does send a message that no one is above the law—especially those who are entrusted with providing public safety to the community.

We have to re-imagine public health and safety. We have to have community engagement to deliver real community policing. Without trust, policing and public safety won't happen. One verdict doesn't change everything. But it does underscore the need for change going forward.

Yesterday, we announced the launch of an Alternative Response Unit, a collaboration between our Police, Fire, and Community Services, under the City's Community Health and Safety Department. This unit seeks to address situations that have historically utilized law enforcement response, but that are ultimately a matter of public health: mental health crises, substance abuse issues, and other matters of social or behavioral health needs. This new unit will respond to calls with a trained crisis response team composed of a case manager, a paramedic, and a law enforcement officer. This unit builds on the longstanding work we have done as a community to engage in a different approach to public safety, including our THRIVE diversion program and Mobile Integrated Health Office.

Santa Fe is proud to stand for equitable and just enforcement of our laws and treatment of all within our city. Our use-of-force policies are among the most progressive in the nation. Our police department engages in extensive training, including anti-bias training. After the killing of George Floyd, we reviewed all our policing policies, ensuring we were following concrete and data-driven strategies like 8 Can't Wait and former HUD Secretary Julián Castro's People First Policing.

Today, we as a nation, and as a city, work toward healing, toward the kind of justice that says, "Not one more."

Kyra Ochoa, Acting Director, Community Health and Safety Department: Today's verdict is an important affirmation that despite the experience of communities of color historically, our justice system is in fact capable of delivering justice. The City's Community Health and Safety Department today recommits to equity and to creating a healthy, safe community for all.

Chief of Police Andrew Padilla: The City of Santa Fe is committed to fair and equitable treatment of all. We hold our police officers to the highest levels of professionalism, and we have long-held policies that ensure the safety and security of those the police come into contact with. Our Police Department has been proactive with maintaining policies that are relevant, progressive, and in-line with constitutional law: policies such as our Directives on Use of Force, Less Lethal Options, Bias Profiling, Response to Persons Affected by Mental Illness, and our Code of Conduct. Many of these directives are only now being adopted by communities across the country. Our Police personnel are highly trained in crisis intervention and response and we have also invested in anti-bias training. We have a reputation for excellence, and remain committed to upholding the constitutional rights of all residents and guests.
