



DANE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY ISMAEL R. OZANNE



PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Date: 07/26/2020

DA OZANNE'S RESPONSE TO PROTESTERS

Dear protesters who have been outside my home:

When you talk about the need for a criminal justice system that understands the impact of racism, I hear you. When you talk about the need for change so that people of color are treated equitably, I hear you. When you chant, "Fuck Ozanne," outside my house until 1:00 a.m. in the morning, I hear you. When you call me a racist until 1:00 a.m. and blast music outside my house, I hear you. Do you know who else heard you? My family who was at home with me, including my children. They also heard you tell them that my whole family was racist. One of my daughters turned to me and asked why you chose to come to our house to make her feel unsafe, when you claim that you want everyone to feel safe.

Your protest was about trying to intimidate me and my family so I would drop the charges against people who have been arrested for crimes committed under the cover of what have largely been peaceful protests in the city and county I grew up in and have lived in. Your protest was about you trying to intimidate me into not doing my job unless I do it the way you think I should do it. You are not going to be successful.

I am a Black man who was raised by a Black mother who fought for racial justice during the 1960's and became the youngest person to become a staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. She trained for Freedom Summer and was busy registering Black voters in Mississippi in 1964, the year that three young civil rights workers were murdered in Nashoba County, Mississippi, by the Ku Klux Klan after corrupt racist law enforcement officers arrested them on trumped-up charges and released them into the hands of the Klan. I grew up knowing the history of racism in America and how it worked hand-in-hand with government entities to deny people of color their full rights as Americans. I grew up knowing what it is like to be Black in America and how there is intergenerational trauma that is passed on to each generation of Black children.

I have chosen to spend most of my career as an Assistant District Attorney and as the District Attorney of Dane County because I believe that government must play a role in keeping people safe, holding criminals accountable, and protecting crime victims just as much as I believe that government must re-examine and confront how systemic and institutional racism in the criminal justice process and in other areas of governance have

maintained the racial inequities that endure to this day. I look at what my office does through the lens of knowing that business-as-usual is unacceptable and that community safety requires new approaches and a shared commitment to just outcomes. I am accountable, as an elected official, to the public and I take my obligation to do my part seriously to make sure that I and my office serve all community interests by considering the evidence in each criminal case, the needs of the offender, and the needs of the community.

I understand your protest strategy is to communicate your position, to disrupt things, and to make people in power feel uncomfortable. And you know what? Your music, your glow sticks, and your blocking my street made my neighbors and family uncomfortable. Thank you for showing the community that you can do all these things while the police – whom you protest – let you exercise your freedom of speech; I am sure in 1964 in Mississippi my mother wished she could expect this type of policing. Thank you for showing the community that it has a choice between your mob approach and people who are committed to justice and to making our community better.

If you are committed to justice and to talking about how we can work to make Dane County a better place for all citizens, you know my phone number – you put it on flyers – and you are welcome to call me. If you are committed to justice we can discuss how to reduce incarceration, to reduce the root causes of crime, and to reduce the shootings in our community, while at the same time we increase the health and wealth of people of color in our community. We can talk about how we allow children of color to thrive in Dane County and in our school systems. And we can talk about how 2020 will be a year that mattered, when this county came together and created solutions.

Your Dane County District Attorney,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ismael R. Ozanne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ismael R. Ozanne
Dane County District Attorney

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