

January 29, 2023

To the Citizens of Paducah and McCracken County,

Several nights ago, an event was held in Paducah, Kentucky. The organization that hosted the event is a fine hardworking organization and it serves our area well. I took a young man with me to the event, who I have been mentoring for several years. A very good friend of mine brought this young man into my scope and I have been blessed by his presence. I wanted to introduce this young man to the 'movers and builders' in our area, to strengthen his base as he steps into adulthood and begins to strengthen our community with his God given gifts.

The night began wonderfully. Many introductions were made to him and I was able to share my circle of trusted associates with him. We had a wonderful dinner at this event. There were hundreds in attendance, to my knowledge. After dinner, it was implicated that we all were to stand to our feet. I was anticipating the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem. Those expectations were soon dashed, rather quickly and dreadfully. Anyone can research that this was a song that was written around 1853, for a Minstrel of stereotype depictions, that had very offensive language and references to black people being moved down south to work in the cane fields (and in 1853 that was not a move that was made voluntarily, namely a slaves lot) was played as everyone was standing 'in honor of the song' at which there was much applause at the end. The language was so offensive that the Ky. General Assembly called for the changing of the original words in 1986. Without going into detail, I sat down after the first offensive word (hoping that the ones in charge would quickly stop the recording) which did not happen. The young man with me, missed the first offensive word (he is young and unfamiliar with the song) though he did sit down quickly after hearing it a second time. I waited until the song was over and everyone sat down and I hoped to hear, albeit late, a quick apology with the first words spoken with the microphone. That did not happen and I left, with my young friend following. I heard later that an 'apology' came about after I left.

One good deed was accomplished after this unpleasant thing happened and that was me having the opportunity to show this young man how to handle an

unpleasant situation, in the moment. If you do not agree with something, at this level, it is best to politely leave and wait until your emotions and feelings calm down, before you decide how to address it.

No one wants to go, to support an event, prepared to dine and share good experiences with those we care about and have something said or lyrics to music being heralded and played, that are embarrassing and detrimental to them.

While serving as a City Commissioner, there was an instance where I fulfilled my vows, by following the law, regarding an incident that may have offended some people. But again, I was fulfilling my sworn vows, so that fairness and order would be followed. However, when personal choice is involved, we all must strive to consider the results of our words and actions. God did not say that our way would be easy.

Paducah is the world writ small. We have many of the same challenges, in our area, that the world faces. As Believers we must remember 2 Corinthians 2:11, we are not unaware of the schemes of the god of this world, namely unprincipled actions and words being applied in inappropriate places and venues. Division is his goal. We must be mindful of our words and actions and how they affect others. Our State Motto, United we stand and divided we fall, is full of Godly wisdom. We must do all we can to be united by compassion in word, thought and deed.

This being said, we must hold ourselves to a higher standard if we are to be the Strong Community that we can be. We must do all we can to be truly thoughtful to each other's concerns. We must put ourselves in the place of others in regards to the decisions we make and not senselessly fight and bicker over things that if we truly unify then we can fix and overcome. We must reach out to each other and help one another whenever possible. Basically, it all boils down to **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**. That is what we will ultimately be judged on. We all can do much better.

Sincerely,
McCracken County Commissioner
Richard Abraham

