



Randy E. Hayman, Water Commissioner

June 5, 2020

Dear PWD Colleagues,

In 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the Philadelphia Water Department processes over 3.4 million gallons of drinking water and cleans more than 3.3 million gallons of wastewater.

And, on May 25, 2020, George Floyd lost his life at the hands of sworn peace officers after being in custody for 8 minutes and 46 seconds in the City of Minneapolis. I have wanted to write about this over the past turbulent days. I wanted to write a pithy, academic, and erudite commentary. Several times, I picked up my pencil, only to put it down, overwhelmed with emotion.

I still hear his gasping, weary, call for his late mother during his final moments. This human story of despair is not an interesting fictional novel that we carefreely take from the library shelf, read and quickly discard. For me, what happened to George Floyd hits close to home in so many ways. Each newly discovered fact flashes with the startling intensity of a bright strobe light in the deepest darkness of night.

First, I am a proud African-American. Second, I am an experienced lawyer. Third, I am a former Assistant Attorney General for the state of Missouri. Fourth, I worked for years with police officers as the leader of DC Crime Solvers, and later as a board member for St. Louis Crime Stoppers. And fifth, I am a former news reporter.

This past week, these perspectives have kept me up at night. As an African-American male, I look at that horrific video of George Floyd's last minutes and I see myself. And if I found myself face down, handcuffed in the same prone position as Mr. Floyd, I too would not be able to muster the superhuman strength required to free myself from the crushing weight of three miscreant men.

And while I am a trained lawyer, a former assistant Attorney General, and an experienced executive, if I was in that exact same situation, those facts would not offer me protection. In a lawfully handled situation, those facts should not matter; the police should only detain and process a suspect once probable cause is established. And even when initiated properly, their actions are limited to the imposition of reasonable force. Period.

Having been a part of neighborhood safety initiatives, I worked with police officers who generously gave time to help the communities they served in the inner city and beyond. Many were good-hearted individuals who gave themselves unselfishly for a bigger cause.

The other day, as my children happily played at my feet making superheroes out of LEGO blocks, I watched a split-screen TV showing protests in Philadelphia, where I proudly serve as the city's first African-American Water Commissioner, and Washington, DC, where I attended law school and professionally matured.

Naturally, my children were oblivious to the criticality of what I was watching. But my heart was not.

And for a second I thought— We need superheroes, or at least superhero strength, to rise above this weighty, stagnant, despairing fog of malaise. But where do we find them? They stand in front of us every day. Our communities consist of superheroes who quietly put food on the table, care for their families, and educate their children. And despite dark days, they find a way to build a brighter tomorrow. And that is more true in few places than our City of Brotherly Love. By determining how we treat one another, we as a group have enormous strengths that can move us all forward: the strength of compassion, the strength of love, the strength of dedication, the strength of respect, the strength of kindness; and most importantly, the strength of humanity. It is imperative that we come together collectively, unwavering in our intolerance of inhuman acts.

On the subject of superheroes, I must humbly admit that I have the pleasure of working with over 2,000 diverse superheroes at the Philadelphia Water Department daily.

When it is freezing outside or over 90 degrees, our crews could simply rush home at the end of their shift but they stay to get the job done. In our contact center, when employees have answered 35 complex and demanding customer inquiries in a row, they are willing to take call number 36. And they do so without fanfare, every day.

Today, in our new reality, at work or from home, the Philadelphia Water Department employees' dedication to excellence and public service is unwavering. When given a challenge, we respond.

I am a big believer that in times of trouble you go back to the basics. As PWD moves forward through the COVID-19 pandemic with forethought and employs the basics of dedication to teamwork, intertwined with a common respect for everyone we interact with, we will become a better organization.

My eyes are clear my friends: we will become stronger, both as a community, and as the Philadelphia Water Department.

Stay safe. Together, we can do great things,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Hayman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Randy E. Hayman, Esq.  
Water Commissioner