

Our City

To those who chose to use their voice:

As I start my 36th year as a teacher and wrap up the last five months as the 2019 Idaho Teacher of the Year it is hard for me to admit that I am failing many of those I have come to respect, admire and even love. As I fail them I also fail their families. It is not what you may think, I am not failing them in the classroom as many are some of my very best students and their families have been long contributors to this community and the productivity of many of our local businesses. In the eight months that I have been the Idaho Teacher of the Year I have spoken frequently to leaders at the State and National level about all of my students and the tremendous support they receive from our School District and our local farmers and businesses; that support has translated into successes beyond even my dreams. Yet, in light of all that, and under the cloak of “Make America Great Again” I am losing the larger battle to keep them in my classroom. Parents of families are moving away to other states or “back to where they came from;” while in other cases entire families are considering relocating. I and others like me, am losing, we are failing those who need us most. I am not just talking about the brown people, no I am also talking about all those who depend on the brown people to come to work every day, work hard and make businesses profitable. I am talking about our entire community and much of our state.

History is replete with tragedies where those with a voice did not stand up and make a difference when they could have for the voiceless. According to the Washington Post on August 8th, last Thursday, “*U.S. authorities strongly defended Wednesday’s mass immigration raids at Mississippi workplaces, saying the secretive operation to arrest undocumented immigrants was successful even as it led to images of weeping children arriving home to find their parents missing.*” It is happening. It is real. Who is next? Many of us still have a choice and a voice should we choose to use it, but – “*Then they came for me - And there was no one left - To speak out for me...*” in the prophetic words of Pastor Martin Niemoller. *We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union...* must do better than this for we are a better people than this.

As a mayor I am afraid for our community, for my friends, my neighbors, the farms and the businesses we all depend upon. As a mayor I feel that I am failing to make the American dream possible for those with the ambition to achieve it; those who work hard every day while making a positive contribution. A contribution I might add that benefits all of us regardless of color, country of origin or citizenship status. Families that have been here 20 years are now imperiled while those they work for face perhaps even a greater threat. I caution those who believe losing much of our “brown” workforce will truly make America great again. I know what it will do to this community and it has no upside.

We, the community of American Falls and others like us are truly what makes America great. A community that is largely color blind and chooses to judge a person’s character on the basis of the contribution they make to the whole. We are the right example. I see that example weekly even through the summer months as adults come to school after work to further their education and language skills. I see it in their kids who place a real value on education as well, for they know it is the key to their success and that of their family. They build their part of the

dream daily and do it gladly with hope in their hearts. Because they may not be a citizen of this country does not mean they aren't a good citizen and productive member of our society. Yes, we are a country of laws, but citizenship should not be the impossible part of the dream; yet it seems to be just that for those like so many of our neighbors, friends and employees.

Until next week...