

## After the protesting, what's next for the Region?

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## After the protesting, what's next for the Region?

Mary Freda  
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**I**n wake of the police killing of George Floyd, protests have emerged across the nation, calling for justice.

Signs with Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe," along with others reading, "Black lives matter," "No justice, no peace" were staples at gatherings throughout the Region in recent weeks.

Now, community leaders are looking at how to keep the conversation going as local protests quiet.

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Cedric Caschetta helped lead a couple of local protests, including one in Crown Point and another in his hometown of Lowell.

For Caschetta, the plan is to host events to continue dialogue.

"We're going to try to do the events to get people to talk more, to blend better, to have that conversation," he said.

"We've talked about getting some council people together to get the door open and conversation started for younger and older people to just talk and to ... get past some of the in retrospect or in perspective not important things going on compared to what's really going on in the world."

 **WATCH NOW: NWI reacts as protests foment over cop-involved killing of George Floyd**

 **NWI residents gather in Crown Point in remembrance of Breonna Taylor**

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Caschetta, who is black and was adopted by a white family as a toddler, said being a part of a local demonstration was important, and he wasn't sure his hometown would have one.

So, he wore a "full disguise" — a hoodie, sunglasses and a bandana — and headed to the Crown Point square. Caschetta said he wanted to remain discreet because he was just there to listen to the message.

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Eventually, he would speak, at one point saying, "You're the change. It's yourself. When you look at yourself in the mirror, you see yourself every morning, you go, 'What can I do to make myself and around me better?'"

At both protests, Caschetta carried a cardboard sign with "My life matters," written in black marker.

**'It's a two-way street'**

State Rep. Carolyn Jackson, D-Hammond, said honest conversation is key.

"I think we need to sit down and talk to people and talk to both sides, not just the police, but those individuals whom it's affecting," Jackson said. "I think what has happened a lot of times is when people sit down and they discuss things, they talk around people. They don't go to the actual people, which in this case would be the black people, and talk about what the issues are, what needs to be addressed, what their concerns are."

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"When it comes to race, a lot of people are afraid to just come out and say, 'What is it that offends black people? Or what is it that offends white people?' or whatever, and they get hung up on race, as opposed to talking to the individual."

Jackson, who spent 30 years working with the Cook County Adult Probation Department, said police officers need to review their apprehension tactics.

"When it comes to things like (a) chokehold and using batons and things to put up against people's necks to choke them, I don't care what color it is. It should not be allowed. It should be outlawed, period," Jackson said. "It's just flat out wrong. There are ways to subdue people that don't require you putting their life in jeopardy."

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 **Police release identities of those arrested in Southlake Mall demonstration**

Jackson added it should be mandatory for officers to wear body cameras.

"Those cameras should be on when they (are) answering calls, and if they are not on, they should have a course of action if they don't have them on," she said. "They not only protect the officer, but it also protects the individual that they're encountering."

Additional measures, such as an independent review board and cultural awareness classes, should be implemented, Jackson said.

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"We have to work to get the community to trust the police officers, and the police officers have to work to get the community to trust them," Jackson said. "It's a two-way street."

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 **WATCH NOW: Mayor joins protesters outside courthouse in Crown Point**

Change, she said, should begin at the local level.

"I would not be willing to go out and say that one proposal or one idea is going to be suitable for each and every local city or town," she said. "I think that that is something that that town or that local area should make for themselves."

There should be general laws, though, such as a mandate requiring all Indiana police departments have body cameras, she said.

 **WATCH NOW: Family of Rashad Cunningham pleads for information in protest**

 **WATCH NOW: Crowd of protesters call for accountability, social justice outside Gary City Hall**

Kwabena Rasuli, who works with Black Lives Matter NWI—Gary, said attitudes toward the black community need to change.

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"(We) need to start realizing that we're all people," Rasuli said. "Black people are struggling, struggling and need help. We don't need to be putting the hammer down on them further like these predatory fines that occur all the time when people are already struggling."

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## Police reform

When looking at police reform throughout the Region, some departments have announced they will review use of force policies.

Gary Mayor Jerome Prince signed an executive order Thursday, establishing a police reform commission that will include civic and business leaders, community activists, faith leaders and community organizations.

### Prince signs executive order creating Gary police reform commission

The Crown Point Police Department recently pulled its use-of-force policy for review and is looking to establish a use-of-force review board, Police Chief Pete Land told The Times on Friday.

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The review board will include the assistant police chief and two commanders; however, the makeup of the board has not been finalized.

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"I haven't fully come up with that yet, who will be on it all the time and then who, based on what the use of force instance is, who else do we bring in to review the reports," Land said.

Land said he believes the department had eight use-of-force instances in the past year, adding he hopes to present plans for the board to the city's Board of Public Works in early July.

Both Land and Crown Point Mayor David Uran said they aren't in favor of disbanding the police department. However, both are open to adding additional resources to the department, such as civilian staff that can be used for mental health or substance abuse calls.

Hobart Mayor Brian Snedecor said the Hobart Police Department "has been on the forefront of modernizing its written policies and its operations over the last several years."

 **Hobart cop under investigation for racial remarks on Facebook, police chief says**

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The department's policies and procedures were overhauled with help from an outside consulting firm in 2013 and implemented in 2014, Snedecor said.

He added the department's physical restraint policy warns of the dangers of positional asphyxia, which is when a person is face down in prone position and the weight of an officer is applied to their backside, impeding normal respiratory function.

Snedecor said officers receive legislative updates on police procedure annually, as well as training on firearms and less-lethal options, such as ground fighting and Taser use.

"Although, we believe our officers are the best recruited and best trained in in-service skills, we are all human, and in such, as humans we are all prone to err on occasion," Snedecor said in an email.

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"We believe that federal funding for continuing to modernize all law enforcement training in these areas, from recruitment to use of force, would reduce the number of accidental and inappropriate, intentional acts."

# Collection: The Region responds to the death of George Floyd

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## Collection: The Region responds to the death of George Floyd

Following the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis, organizers throughout multiple municipalities in the Region joined with others in rallying against systemic racism.

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### WATCH NOW: Cops form blockade to keep protesters off I-80/94; mayor works to calm crowd

Times Staff | Updated Jun 19, 2020 |

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