

Palzewicz: Calls for major shift in racial attitudes

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Brookfield, WI – Americans have been shocked and horrified by the deaths of African American men after encounters with police officers. Democrat Tom Palzewicz asserts that the problem is systemic, and all Americans need to examine their inner thoughts and beliefs.

The problem goes beyond one's idea of what is and what is not racism. It strikes to the core of personal values. Palzewicz believes people need to have empathy and try to understand that while their lives might be going along fine, others are struggling daily.

"I think it starts with us as a country," said Palzewicz. "We have systemic and institutional racism, and I think anybody who says that we don't is just not in-tune with what people of color go through daily. The western edges of Milwaukee County are in the Fifth Congressional District. Milwaukee County declared racism as a health threat, health emergency, and what that means is we must look at everything through the lens of racial equity.

Racial attitudes permeate everything in American society. The reports of black men dying at the hands of police have prompted demonstrations throughout the country and the world.

"Until we start doing that with every single institution we have, we will not move forward," said Palzewicz. "Every institution, be it our justice system, our policing system, everything, unless we start taking a look and really saying how are we actually treating all people, including people of color from an institutional and a systemic standpoint, we're not going to be able to solve racism."

Palzewicz explains that racism is ingrained in our system. It is something that is tolerated by allowing injustices to continue, unpunished, and without any concerted effort to demand change.

“I personally believe it’s tough to convince individual people who are racist not to be racist, but it doesn’t mean we have to allow racists to be able to operate within a structure that allows them to do what they do,” said Palzewicz. “Derek Chauvin, the police officer that murdered George Floyd, was all part of a system. He was brought up in different ways. I think 17 times, he was reprimanded as a police officer, and he was still allowed to go out in the street and treat people the way he wanted to treat them. That is part of the system. 17 times. I don’t know if anybody else would have a job where you would go in front of your boss 17 times, and they would say, “Don’t worry about it. Just go back to doing what you’re doing.”

Palzewicz does not believe in “defunding” the police. Instead he favors re-allocating funds to solve racial problems and create more effective police forces.

“I personally believe it starts with budgeting,” said Palzewicz. “There’s this idea that we need to defund the police. It’s not defund. It’s divest and reinvest. Where do we need to take money and make sure we’re investing in mental health, in jobs, in schools? Where are we going to take that money and make sure that it’s actually working for the community instead of what’s really happening today?”

Palzewicz believes fixing the problems will be far less expensive than completely starting from scratch and building an entirely new police force. It begins with education programs, community outreach, and a grassroots effort to listen and understand the experiences of all people of color.

“We are all in this together, and we came here to the United States from every part of the world,” said Palzewicz. “You start by loving your neighbor as yourself. Change has to come from within.”