

Sen. Larson: Statement on outcome of Derek Chauvin trial

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Milwaukee, WI - “On March 31st, 1968. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered one of the most memorable lines in a life that was full of them. “We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” Some 53 years later, one could forgive Black Americans if they started to wonder if this sentiment had in fact proven to be untrue. As our nation, and indeed much of the world, erupted in protest for racial justice last year in numbers not seen since the 1960s, hope for real reform began to grow. But, as we have seen time after time, tragedy after tragedy, while the arc of the moral universe may be long, it doesn’t bend toward justice all on its own.

“It’s a reality that George Floyd experienced first-hand for the last 9 minutes and 29 seconds of his life, as Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck ‘til he died. Video of this tragic and brazen misuse of force by a man sworn to serve and protect has traumatized people of color, particularly young Black men, in a way that no white person can truly comprehend.

“Today, the jury reached a verdict of guilty on all 3 counts in the murder trial of Derek Chauvin. It’s hard to call it justice when George Floyd will never see his family again, but at the very least the famed “blue wall” of silence has begun to crumble, and our justice system can work, even for those it has too often hurt.

“One positive verdict does not undo all the damage that’s been done. How does the United States reckon with its original sin of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow, and decades of bigotry and gaslighting from people and institutions that have continued to fail people of color in spectacular fashion? How do we create communities where all residents are equally respected and protected by the public servants who serve in their name?

“It starts with all of us being honest with ourselves, admitting our biases, and doing our part to dismantle the systems of oppression that have allowed white supremacy to thrive for over 400 years in this occupied indigenous land that makes up our shared country.

“It’s about embracing our humanity and rejecting any system or ideology that would seek to divide us and turn our neighbors into enemies.

“With steps forward and stumbles backward, let us again rededicate ourselves to the purposeful improvement of our justice system, our country, and our sense of humanity. Today isn’t a finish line or a starting line, it’s a mile marker of progress in bending the arc slowly toward justice.”