

July 22, 2021

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF BEND THE ARC

There is nothing more hopeful than a playground. There is no crime, no color, no hatred, the only conflicts might be over the swings.

Like a playground slide, we are bending the arc toward the children of Hillview Park.

The Bend the Arc reforms that I announced a year ago – from giving out \$50,000 in community grants to groups fighting for racial justice to expunging low-level criminal records - are happening today so that the children of Santa Clara County can play together tomorrow.

The people in our community are not so different than in Minneapolis, where George Floyd's little daughter lives. People everywhere want safety, and they want fairness. Some people say they are in the fairness camp. Others say they are in the safety squad. The fact is – just like all us - one can't exist without the other. People want good parks and schools, safe streets, caring cops in their neighborhoods and dangerous people out of them. We have issues, but none are beyond the strength of a neighborhood that works shoulder to shoulder with the women and men who are dedicated to protect and serve them. That is why we are all here today.

Our work is not just in the courts. It is in the parks, in the classrooms, in the playgrounds working side-by-side with parents who are just trying to do the things they need to do. What do we need to do? We need to make the criminal justice system better for all.

So – as part of the Bend the Arc reforms I announced a year ago today - we ceased filing driving on a suspended license for failures to pay fines in criminal court to allow more moms and dads to drive their children to school in the morning or to camp or day care. We are working strongly against cash bail because we understand that the working-class of our community should never be held to a different standard than those who have more money.

Like a soccer ball, we are bending the arc toward the people of Hillview Park. One of the grants that we are giving out today is for after school sports in Valley Palms. Our kids need goals not gangs.

Isaiah Love can come there as a coach or tell his life story at the justice day camp for children put on by the NAACP with help from these grants. A year ago, Isaiah was in San Quentin State Prison. One of my reforms was to look, look hard, for incarcerated people who were ready to be released early to become productive citizens. One such person was Mr. Love. And with the help of dedicated advocates like Hillary Blout of For The People and Silicon Valley De-Bug, we released him. He would be here today, but he's in class at Hack Reactor, learning to be a computer coder. Mr. Love knows the power of second chances. And so do we.

With that power must come accountability for the people who control those chances. Police officers and others with power to do good for our children and their parents must be held just as accountable as a coach or a bus driver for a crime. We created the Public and Law Enforcement Integrity Team, a special unit to investigate and prosecute law enforcement officers and elected officials who abuse their power. We also created the Worker's

Exploitation Task Force, a multi-jurisdictional team to go after those in our community who abuse and exploit their workers.

Like the bough of a shade tree, the arc is bending toward justice under the weight of our willingness to stand together, as a team, as we are today. One of the grants, right here in Hillview Park, will be for the Cassell Homeowners Association to put in a series of trees to be blessed by Aztec dancers. Their beauty will grow over the years along with our children, along with a Santa Clara County that is better for them and for all of us.

The concept behind these grants is right here in this beautiful park. It is in the knowledge that public safety and equity are not office jobs, they are responsibilities of all of us here. We at the DA's office work hard to do our part, but we would never be successful without the community that we are so proud and lucky to serve. For 10 years we have proudly partnered with our community to paint murals, take back the nights, and walk a mile in her shoes. Today, we are taking money that was taken from our communities by criminals and giving it back to our community. That money will be used to teach cooking skills in Gilroy; to teach civic skills for Filipinos; for children in our community to explore with the NAACP the Black Lives Matter movement. Because Black Lives Matter.

And for folks in the Welch Park neighborhood to break bread with police officers, realizing that both must understand each other as two sides of the same coin and work together better. Because We Must Work Together To Make Things Better.

There are those who seek to cut down our progress, break up our teams, create cracks within our close community. Anger is not advocacy. Cynicism is not a solution. The solution is solidarity.

The solution is standing around us right here in this beautiful city park. It is the children playing in the playground behind me.

Today, these community grants and reforms are an example of the strength of our hope and resilience of our ties to each other. We are unbreakable when we stand together watching over our children here in Hillview Park, in Cardoza Park in Milpitas, in Ortega Park in Sunnyvale, and among the peaceful pines and palms of Christmas Tree Park in Gilroy.

Let's Bend the Arc together - with Reforms That Work. Let's watch our children grow up and raise their own children in a better, safer, more fair Santa Clara County.