



United Way of Tucson  
and Southern Arizona



# Why I Can't Watch

R. Tony Penn, President and CEO  
United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

Here we are again, the senseless brutal killing of an unarmed black man caught on video cameras. Again, we have the video record of the gruesome and heinous attack at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve, chronicled for posterity to be watched, displayed, and consumed, over and over again. However, at the writing of these words my spirit says no, not again, please don't watch. My soul says no, I cannot bear it. As a local faith leader, it is becoming more challenging to help others believe that change is going to come. Will viewing another tragedy stir in me a paralyzing fear for my son's, grandsons, nephews, and those Black Americans across our nation? Will that fear impede the spirit of the work in making a difference through the leadership role I play with United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona?

Those are the questions I grapple with personally and professionally as I say to those who may read these words, here we are again. At this moment, as I reflect that, a young man, a schoolteacher, a father, and a son, by the name of Tyre Nichols joins the likes of George Floyd and far too many others. Here we are again. As a community we mourn with a mother, who's lost a son, siblings who lost a brother, a boy who lost his dad. As we arrive here again, please know this, our thoughts, and our prayers, although I'm sure are welcomed by the city of Memphis, and the Nichols family, fall far too short. The trauma, mental anguish, and stress we feel is real in black communities across America today.

Yet I know we are capable of large-scale change. I see it everyday at the helm of United Way of Tucson. I see donors, volunteers, businesses, municipalities, and partner agencies rally around critical issues and work strategically to better our community. I see parents, teachers, caregivers, healthcare workers and others, step up every day to push for positive change. We can and must stop this tragic unchecked institutional violence.

This moment calls for us to unite with the power of a caring community and, as people of conscience, to call and promote the passage of The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which passed the house in 2021. We must demand our legislators pass these modest reforms and protections that can make a difference and create more accountability, so that we're not back here, time and time again. We all have a role to play in this fight of equal justice under the law for all.

No, I can't watch another one, not now, I desperately hope never again. Especially if we as a community can prove that we possess the courage, resolve, and the will, that together we have the capacity to stop it from happening and then maybe, none of us would have to watch again.