

GUEST COLUMN to the MONROE DISPATCH

For the Thursday, July 7, 2016 Edition

From: Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo

Civic Center Shooting, Safety and Solutions

We want to ask our entire community to pray for the two families who lost loved ones as a result of the senseless tragic event that occurred early Sunday, July 3. I want to ask that you also pray for the other gunshot victims who are recovering at this time. I want to commend Police Chief Quentin Holmes and the men & women of the Monroe Police Department for the swift arrest and their ongoing efforts in this investigation to bring to justice the person or people responsible for this tragedy. The families of the victims deserve to know what happened and we will do everything we can to make sure those who are guilty are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

It is sad that we are at a place in time where so many people chose to settle beefs with guns...instead of words! It's said that tragic incidents such as this are taking place in our city, parish, State, and all over the country. I commend those within our community who are talking about and walking for peace. We need everyone to embrace this concept. We need parents, family members, faith-based leaders, educators, coaches, and mentors to help persuade young people to put down the guns and pick up the bible, a trade, a hobby or something constructive to do.

The young men and women who attended the party at the Monroe Civic Center had just as much of a right to enjoy themselves and celebrate the holiday weekend, as those of us who were at the riverfront OR a house party. The party promoter hired security and there were no incidents during the actual party inside the civic center arena. Even with security in place, no one can predict what may be going on in someone's mind.

The party at the Monroe Civic Center was over and people were leaving the arena when the shooting occurred in the north parking lot. Our preliminary investigation shows the shooting was linked to an ongoing issue between the parties involved. It had nothing to do with the fact that this as a BYOB event. BYOB events (both promoted and private) happen seven days a week in just about every city. There have been nearly a dozen BYOB events at the Civic Center in the past six months; and, the Civic Center has hosted dozens more of other types of events where alcohol was served during that same six months. All were held without incidents like this past weekend. These aforementioned events (without incident) include people of various racial, age, and socio-economic backgrounds. That proves that people of all types know how to have a good time without the situation getting out of hand.

There have been more than 300 events at the Civic Center during the past year; and, this is the first time something like this has happened. As a matter of fact, it has been more than 30 years since a tragic incident of this nature has occurred on the civic center complex. Literally, thousands of events have been held there since prior to the July 3 shooting. That's less than a fraction of 1% of the time. I said that because I want to re-emphasize that the Civic Center is a safe facility. This tragic shooting is a rare incident fueled by an ongoing feud between some individuals who knew one another. Our MPD is working hard to identify all suspects and bring them to justice. If you saw something, please say something. And, please remember to keep all of the families involved in your prayers. We must be the change that we want to see!

By working together, we can make a difference. Monroe is one city, with one future!