

Brothers Before Others Inc.

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Press Release

Established in 2014, Brothers Before Others has been tending to the needs and concerns of law enforcement and their families. The name and concept is no different than the instruction given to airplane passengers should their plane begin to go down: “Put YOUR mask on first”, because if you’re not cared for, you’ll be unable to help anyone else.

No one knows the needs and concerns of police officers and their families quite like police officers and their families. Unless you do this job and live this life, there is no story that I can tell you that will make you FEEL our perspective. The divide between the way law enforcement views things and the way civilians view things rears its’ head every so often. It’s unavoidable. Which brings me to the latest example to cross my plate.

One of our members, who is also a retired NYPD police officer, was traveling with his family and decided to make a stop at the Johnny Cash Museum located in Nashville, Tennessee. That stop is a no-brainer as Johnny Cash is as much a part of Americana as any individual, living or deceased. During his tour, he stopped in the gift shop. He observed two sculptures that were made from steel taken from the World Trade Centers in New York City. Having worked that day in NY and the months that followed, seeing what he believed to be a price tag on one of the sculptures enraged him.

While it was later determined that neither of the donated/gifted sculptures were, in fact, for sale, many of our members, including myself, have concerns over their placement. The sculptures are advertised on the museums website as being located in the gift shop, in what could be perceived as an attempt to draw people into that area; essentially ‘buy-a-shirt’ clickbait. These items deserve to be treated and displayed in a manner befitting their source and the lives lost that day.

When confronted with that point of view, instead of trying to understand the point of view of our members, many who also worked during that time period, they responded with dismissal, arrogance and even aggression. Our perspective was dismissed as ‘invalid’ and we were advised that WE were missing the point. According to the museum staff, the placement of the steel sculptures was irrelevant because they ‘get 500,000 people through the door every year’.

As a retired NYPD police officer myself and someone whose career encompassed both the 1993 WTC bombing and 9/11, I find it unconscionable that my opinion would be dismissed so easily when it comes to the handling of such a treasure.

Time is relentless. I accept that. 9/11 is being taught to high school children now as a part of history; something they weren't alive for. While every living person understands the gravity of that day, it's meaning and impact is different for every individual. As such, I am not upset with the notion that someone may see the issue here or not. What I am upset with is the ease with which our collective point of view is dismissed.

Let this serve as official notice that now you have my attention. This issue needs to be discussed and should be easily resolved. The disrespect that was shown to me, my members and my charity will not be tolerated.

Michael J Burke, President & Founder
Brothers Before Others

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