



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

BEING BLACK IS NOT A CRIME!

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

DETROIT – 50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. diagnosed for the nation its most dangerous and deadly spiritual ulcer. Yet today, there are still too many in our communities who have failed to heed his prescription to see our character because they are too blinded by our color.

America still suffers from an illness rooted in an assumption fueled by a false perception and sustained by our racial condition. The recent shooting at 14-year old Brennan Walker, at a home in Rochester Hills, while simply trying to find his way to school, by a white homeowner, is another case-in-point. According to young Mr. Walker, after he knocked on the door for directions, he stepped back, a lady came to the door and started yelling, *"Why are you trying to break into my house?"* He indicated he was simply asking for directions. Herein lies the assumption. He is a black youth, at a white door, in a suburban neighborhood, therefore he must be trying to break in. Immediate reaction: grab your gun, shoot first, ask questions later.

The perception for many is very simply, if you see one of them – Philando Castile, Stephon Clark, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and others - they must be up to no good so shoot. It is sustained, as evidenced by recent studies reflecting patterns and practices, as reported in the New York Times special article *When Black Children Are Targeted for Punishment* by Derrick Darby and John L. Rury, dated September 25, 2017. In a study from the Arkansas school system, the state ranks 13th in the out-of-school suspension gap between black and white students. In the 2012 school year, black students were suspended five times as often as whites with little having changed as of today. The same report finds several northern states including Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin that rank above Arkansas in the white and black suspension gap. The Department of Education reports that black students nationally were three times more likely to be suspended than whites in 2012. These suspensions occur most often in secondary schools, but black children were more than twice as likely to be suspended from preschools as well.

Walker Statement

Harsher discipline for blacks is not a southern or state level problem. It is a national crisis. These issues regarding racial differences in conduct and character have long and tragic histories in America. In 1891, the southern educator J.L.M. Curry proclaimed that *"blacks displayed a lack of self-restraint and didn't obey moral law."* Today, these views are maintained by some in policing, from various police departments. They are not willing to prosecute illegal or abusive behavior. Too many have refused to make cultural changes within their own departments.

Very often, black youth are viewed as adults with threatening or deadly behavior. It makes it easy then for one to justify taking them down, shooting them, or treating elementary school children, in some cases, as one might treat an adult. It is a blatant disregard for the personhood of the individual. It provides an excuse for some to be judge, jury, and executioner without any thoughtful or careful analysis. These are perceptions that are enhanced by some in leadership who often pit one group against the other. They are inspired by leaders who identify certain groups of people as rapists, murderers, terrorists and less than human. It is often exacerbated when the leader of the nation describes certain people of color, blacks in particular, as not wanting to go back to their huts and shacks and coming from "shithole countries." These racist attitudes sustain and give permission for shooting down black youth with impunity, after all, who really cares.

These assumptions and attitudes are further magnified in a report by Badger, Miller, Pearce, and Quealy, dated March 14, 2018, entitled *Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism of Black Boys*. The study reflects the great gap between black boys raised in America, even in families living in some of the most well-to-do neighborhoods. These young boys, later as men, still earn less in adulthood than white boys in a study that traces the lives of millions of children. According to Dr. Ibram Kendi, a Professor and Director of the Anti-Racist Research and Policy Center at American University, *"One of the most popular, liberal, post-racial ideas is the idea that the fundamental problem is class and not race, and clearly this study explodes this idea. But, for whatever reason we are unwilling to stare racism in the face."* Again, these issues continue to be fed and nurtured quite consistently in the response to black life by many in our society.

We must be very clear. Whether or not it was Brennan Walker, age 14, knocking on the door in the daylight in Rochester asking for help, he was still shot at for his efforts. In case you forgot, Renisha McBride, age 19, was shot in the face at midnight and killed in Dearborn Heights as she asked for help for her efforts. Until our society has a heart and a head transformation, we will continue to see not our God given humanity but our contagious racial insanity. Face it America, we have a problem. It's called racism. Until we own it, we cannot cure it. What are you going to do about it?

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