



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT**

### **STOP THE KILLING! START THE TALKING!**

**DETROIT (May 16, 2018)** – Mother’s Day is usually a time for families to gather together to honor women, matriarchs, and significant individuals who have spent their lives raising their children. It is not a day that any mother would want or perceive as a moment where she might be forced to bury her child.

The shooting death of Derek Leon Roberts, age 34, on Mother’s Day 2018, apparently at the hands of Rami Ali Jaber, a clerk at the Citgo Gas Station, located on the corner of Southfield and W. McNichols, provides an unfortunate tragic example. From all indications, it appears there was an exchange of words between Rami Jaber and Derek Roberts. Mr. Jaber reportedly came from behind the standard glass enclosure and fired a fatal shot to the chest of Mr. Roberts. This is another tragedy that impacts two families. Many of us thought that glass enclosures were designed to protect and secure the proprietor from possible burglary or other inappropriate activity. Therefore, one would think there is no obvious reason, if your life or other individuals is not at risk, to come from behind such an enclosure. Mr. Jaber was arraigned and charged with first degree murder in this incident. The Detroit Police Department and the Wayne County Prosecutor’s office indicates there is both video and audio information which may detail what occurred at the station.

Our hearts go out to the family of Derek Roberts in the loss of his life. This should not have occurred. There is no way one can adequately replace a life that has not yet been fully lived. We are not insensitive to the fact that the family of Mr. Jaber is also damaged as a result of his life that will now change forever.

For years, there have been conflicts which arise from time to time from such incidents. There have been many occasions where members of African and Arab American communities have come together to address cultural and community issues that speak to the need for mutual respect and understanding. The community again has to deal with a young black life that has been snuffed out before his family and friends could witness his complete growth and development. It appears that the pursuit of justice is on the right track. The police department has made an arrest. The courts have held an arraignment, and we believe, from all indications, appropriate charges have been filed. As we move to address this situation:

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**Gas Station Murder**

- A. The family of Derek Roberts should be supported and given every courtesy and respect that they are due.
- B. Justice should be applied swiftly and appropriately in this specific situation.
- C. There needs to be more communication, sensitivity training, and cultural orientation among businesses, be they gas stations or local store owners, with the people that they serve.
- D. Viable organizations and individuals need to assess together a strategy that will bring together as opposed to continuously keeping some in these two important communities apart.

The reality is we live in the city of Detroit. There are business owners who operate in the city of Detroit. We will either continue to have these incidents or we can make a decision to foster a deeper understanding with accountability for inappropriate actions. There are too many situations, often fatal, whether at a gas station, Starbucks, corner store, airport, restaurant, standing on a sidewalk, playing in a park, walking in a neighborhood, or knocking on a front door, where African Americans are not viewed with respect like every other person. African Americans have worth, value, and significance. Everyone must think before they act and act like they have been doing some thinking. Let us all remember that **Being Black Is Not A Crime**.

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