

To: Lenny Curry, Mayor of Jacksonville  
Mike Williams, Sheriff, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office  
Tommy Hazouri, President, Jacksonville City Council  
Melissa Nelson, State Attorney  
Diana L. Greene, DCPS Superintendent  
Daniel Davis, President, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce

On May 25, 2020, George Perry Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, was killed by Minneapolis police officers. On February 23, 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old black man, was killed after being hunted down like an animal by three hate-filled men in Brunswick, Georgia. These are only two on a long list of black men and women who have lost their lives due to violent racism in our country. While we are thankful that neither of these two incidents took place in our city, Jacksonville is far from perfect, and we could be just a spark away from being thrust into the national spotlight.

There are matters in our city that need to be addressed by our leadership and our citizens. As clergy and community leaders, we stand with the Jacksonville Branch of the NAACP, the Northside Coalition of Jacksonville, and other organizations and individuals who share these common concerns. We are willing to work with anyone who genuinely shares our interest and passion for eradicating racism in our city. We join with them in lending our support and our voices to ensure that this time, something happens and that something changes. We urge our city officials and civic leaders to take the necessary steps to heal the racial divide, and ensure equal protection under the law for all of our citizens.

Specifically, we are calling for the following:

1. The Mayor and the Sheriff make a formal statement strongly condemning the actions of the Minneapolis police officers involved in the death of George Floyd. Neither the City of Jacksonville nor the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office will condone such behavior.
2. The Sheriff and State Attorney review of the matters that led to the detainment and arrest of Minister Delanie Smith on May 31, as she was attempting to promote peace and order during a protest. Following this review appropriate action should be taken, which may include the clearing of her arrest record, and an apology from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.
3. The Sheriff and the State Attorney should immediately release the police bodycam footage capturing the events leading up to and including the death of 22-year-old Jamee Johnson. Other municipalities are releasing bodycam footage within days. Although this event took place in December 2019, the video has not been released. All bodycam footage involving police shootings must be released promptly regardless of whether that footage benefits the case of JSO or the victim.

4. A Citizens Review Board should be established in an effort to foster respect, transparency, trust, and accountability between the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and the community. This review board would be responsible for providing oversight of investigations of complaints made against the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. The board's composition should be demographically and geographically diverse, and should be independent from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and city government.
5. The State Attorney, as the local prosecutor, works very closely with JSO in investigating and trying cases in our judicial system. Because of this close prosecutor-police relationship, there exists a natural conflict of interest in cases of police misconduct. It is imperative that we ensure actual and perceived fairness in the prosecution of police officers when they are the defendant. Our nation has seen too many instances where local prosecutors refused to bring charges against police officers, even when the evidence clearly showed culpability. Therefore, we call on the State Attorney to automatically recuse himself or herself whenever a police officer is the defendant.
6. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office should immediately implement the following:
  - a. Provide more diversity and cultural sensitivity training, with a special emphasis on implicit bias, black culture, and structural racism. Also, provide more stress and mental health management services for officers. Officers who are dealing with high levels of stress are more likely to make poor decisions, especially on the streets.
  - b. Conduct a review and publish a report on the number and percentage of black police officers by position and rank, in comparison to the percentage of black residents in Duval County.
  - c. Implement programs to increase the number of black police officers, especially in the higher ranks of leadership.
  - d. Conduct roundtable conversations with black police officers in an environment where officers can speak truthfully without the risk of negatively impact on their career and advancement opportunities with the organization.
  - e. Perform an independent review of police officer disciplinary records, with a focus on officers with multiple serious offenses. Such an officer, if not properly counseled and disciplined, could be the next bad actor who could put us on the national stage for all of the wrong reasons.

We know that eventually the protests will stop, and the media will move on to the next story. But we will not stop, and we will not move on. In addition to the above matters that relate to policing in our city, there are many other matters that must be addressed if we are serious about ending racism and discrimination in our city. Those issues include addressing racism directly; increasing the number of black and brown judges; supporting the development and success of black owned businesses; eliminating food deserts; addressing educational disparities; providing sidewalks, lighting and other assets in traditionally overlook neighborhoods, supporting grass root community organizations; addressing the overrepresentation of black males in the criminal justice system; and expanding voting rights. We will collaborate and work

with others to develop plans and programs to address each of these matters. We know it won't be easy, but we are prepared for the task that lies ahead.

Although Minneapolis is 1,475 miles away, for blacks living in Jacksonville it seems as if it was just around the corner. Almost every black man in Jacksonville and in America has stories of how they have had to overcome instances of racial prejudice. We encourage us to tell our stories, while we encourage others of us to listen with our ears, hearts and minds. But beyond talking and listening, we must also engage in doing. Let's work together to make Jacksonville better for all.

Sincerely,

Pastors (In Alphabetical Order):

Pastor H.B. Charles, Senior Pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Dr. Eugene W. Diamond, Senior Pastor of Abyssinia Missionary Baptist Church  
Dr. Mark L. Griffin, Senior Pastor of Wayman Temple A.M.E. Church  
Bishop John E. Guns, Senior Pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church  
Bishop Terry Hill, Jr., Senior Pastor of The Citadel Church  
Bishop Arthur T. Jones, Senior Pastor of All People International Church  
Pastor Christopher McKee, Senior Pastor of The Church of Oakland  
Pastor Tan Moss, Senior Pastor of Greater Grant Memorial A.M.E. Church  
Dr. John Allen Newman, Senior Pastor of The Sanctuary at Mount Calvary  
Dr. Jeffrey K. Rumlin, Senior Pastor of Dayspring Baptist Church  
Bishop Leofric W. Thomas, Sr., Senior Pastor of Open Arms Christian Fellowship  
Dr. Gary L. Williams, Senior Pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church  
Dr. Landon L. Williams, Sr., Senior Pastor of Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church  
Dr. Marvin C. Zanders, II, Senior Pastor of St. Paul A.M.E. Church  
Pastor Brian Campbell, Executive Pastor of Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church  
Pastor Ardel Jones, Executive Pastor of All People International Church