

From: Westside Neighbors for Black Lives Coalition

To: Madison Police and Fire Commission

July 13, 2020

Dear Police and Fire Commissioners Boggess, Enemuoh-Trammell, Gundlach, Hamdan, and Jackson,

We can't keep silent on the systemic hatred of Black people, and violence that is policing and the criminal "justice" system in Madison and Dane County, and this country as a whole. You are searching for the next Madison Police Chief and I have some candidates for you: Brandi Grayson. M. Adams. Dr. Damita Brown.

The leader of the Madison Police should not be an officer. It should not be someone who is acculturated to police thinking. Former police have made it very clear that police culture is essentially violent, with victimization the poor and POC ingrained in training and socialization of police ([Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop, June 6](#)). You should certainly not hire Cameron McClay. Do NOT hire that man. We can see from his Op-Ed in the Cap Times ("[Policing, Quo Vadis](#)") that he believes that police are Christ-like heroes by their nature, which they are not. They are flawed (human) people who are acculturated to aggress and oppress citizens, especially our lack, Brown, Indigenous and People of Color (BBIPOC) citizens, in the belief that any questioning or resistance to oppression is a personal danger to them.

The leader of the Madison Police should be someone committed to defunding and abolishing police. This person should have a demonstrated history of work and study toward Black liberation and the liberation of all Black people, Brown people, Indigenous people and People of Color (BBIPOC). This person should be someone who understands systemic racism because they have lived it as well as studied it. Madison's new Chief of Police should be someone who has deep knowledge of violence as a matter of Public Health.

How about a few more candidates: Mahnker Dahnweih. Jessica Williams. April Kigeya. Lature Carter. Bianca Gomez.

The new Chief should be a Black womxn who has Black children or grandchildren who live in Madison. I intend no disrespect toward Black men by saying this. I say the new Chief should be a Black womxn because this person should understand deeply and personally how patriarchy and misogyny works within policing. This person should have experience serving the needs of domestic violence and sexualized violence survivors.

The new Chief should have a deep understanding of the historic and ongoing function of police to protect property at the expense of human, especially BBIPOC lives, especially Black

lives. This person should have a clear and deep understanding of how the laws of this country protect and prefer property and wealth over human life and safety, and be able to offer analysis and a plan to use the position of the police chief to fundamentally disrupt and depart from that twisted and anti-human value system.

To be clear, we are naming these candidates because they are Black womxn leaders whose words and actions we follow. To our knowledge none of them have put their names forward for this position. Each of them is doing very important work for and in the BBIPOC communities of Madison. That is the point. You, the Police and Fire Commissioners, will do a disservice to our community if you hire a new Police Chief from those who apply. We see from your Press Release of July 1st that you are “committed to listening to all residents of the City of Madison”. We see that you have put out an “Open Call to Community Organizations to Provide Input”. As we’re certain you are aware, Madison is a majority-white city in which BBIPOC experience severe disparities in policing and criminal justice. Therefore, we EXPECT you to reach out to the leaders we have mentioned. We EXPECT you to draft these leaders in the search for a Police Chief candidate who will stand up for Madison’s BBIPOC communities by making the Madison Police Force obsolete. While we understand that you must provide opportunities for input from all of the community, we EXPECT you to give preference to the voices of the BBIPOC community, because it is BBIPOC safety that will be most impacted by your decision.

These are the qualifications we want you to look for in the next Madison Police Chief. Please listen to the Movement for Black Lives and search your souls for the strength to depart from the easy path, laid out for you, of choosing the Police Chief from among the ranks of existing Police leaders who are already invested and acculturated to the status quo, who believe that the Police “reform” can possibly change the status quo. It can’t.

We see from your Press Release that you are listening. We ask that you listen first and foremost to those whose lives are most impacted, and act accordingly. We will not accept anything less from you than this. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Westside Neighbors for Black Lives Coalition

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