

**Isaiah Rumlin**  
*President*

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

### **JACKSONVILLE BRANCH**

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### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Sam Newby  
The Honorable Terrance Freeman  
The Honorable Brenda Priestly  
The Honorable Garrett Dennis  
The Honorable Joyce Morgan  
The Honorable Ju'Coby Pittman  
The Honorable Reginald Gaffney

From: Jacksonville African American Civic and Social Organizations

Subject: Establishing a Jacksonville City Council Black Caucus

Date: May 29, 2020

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On behalf of the residents of Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, we, the undersigned community leaders, are proposing that you take this opportunity to prioritize collectively, the major issues confronting the Districts by establishing a City Council Black Caucus.

A Black Caucus could articulate the needs and interests of Jacksonville in general and Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10 in particular. A City Council Black Caucus could also address long-neglected health and economic disparities and other issues that negatively affect the black community.

For the first time in Jacksonville's history, 7 of the 19 city council members are black. Collectively, you could have a significant influence on decisions impacting the city of Jacksonville.

Jacksonville is the proverbial "Tale of Two Cities," one rich, robust, vibrant, and growing (Districts 1, 2, 3, 6, 13, mostly white, affluent, and rural), while the other (Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, primarily black, underprivileged, neglected, and urban).

The following are some of the issues and concerns that negatively affect the black community that a City Council Black Caucus could address:

#### **HEALTH**

The Coronavirus pandemic has revealed the magnitude of the economic and health disparities in the black community due to a maldistribution of resources by federal, state, and local governments. Among the health disparities are the following:

- Hypertension, diabetes, asthma, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases are critical health disparities in districts 7, 8, 9, and 10.
- African American infants are almost three times more likely than whites to die before their first birthday.
- HIV cases among African Americans are five times the rate of the white population.
- African Americans in Duval County have the highest cancer morbidity rate.
- According to Duval County Medical Society President Sunil Joshi, “Jacksonville has 42 food deserts, and 40% are in Northwest Jacksonville.”

## CRIME, JUSTICE AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The relationship between JSO and the African American community needs significant improvement. According to two JCCI surveys, 88% of African Americans do not trust the police to treat them fairly. The following are areas of concern:

- JSO, FOP, and the state attorney will not release police body and dashcam videos of police shootings and other incidents.
- There is a lack of transparency in incidents involving shootings by JSO officers.
- The current number of police shootings (8) is on pace to exceed the record in 2008 (28 police shootings).
- Jacksonville’s unsolved murders are the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the state despite a record JSO budget of \$429 Million.
- Jacksonville’s violent crime rate is 55% higher than Florida’s average and 57% higher than the national average.
- FDLE and JSO Internal Affairs investigating civilian complaints. (Police investigating police.)
- JSO and FOP are resistant to the institution of a Civilian Review Board.
- There is a history of inequality in the criminal justice system.
- There are racial disparities in sentencing.

## EDUCATION

The elementary, middle, and high schools in Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, have deteriorated internally (resources available to the student population), and externally (old buildings, lack of heat, and A.C., etc.). The proliferation of charter schools represents a frontal assault on the system of public education as taxpayer dollars finance and support private enterprises (charter schools).

- The school board needs full independence from the mayor, city council, and the Civic Council.
- The city should provide maintenance funds for public schools.
- The city should improve salaries for teachers.
- The city of Jacksonville should budget annually for public school maintenance.

## HOUSING

We need increased oversight of public housing in Jacksonville as well as inspections conducted by the City of Jacksonville of Section 8 properties owned by private individuals in Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10. Other areas of concern are:

- Higher rate of mortgage denial for blacks compared to whites.
- The city's housing pattern is still basically segregated.
- Conventional mortgage loans are denied more often for blacks.
- City compliance agencies ignore mold-infested and vermin-infested managed by slumlords.
- Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, need more affordable housing units and apartment complexes.
- The city should institute a rent control policy to facilitate affordable rentals.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

The wealth gap widened precipitously after the economic meltdown of 2007-2008. The Coronavirus pandemic is creating massive unemployment throughout the nation and in Jacksonville. There must be a District 7, 8, 9, and 10 importances in post-pandemic economic recovery.

- African American employment is twice that of whites.
- Job discrimination is rampant in Duval County (e.g., EEOC lawsuits).
- There is income inequality in jobs and promotions.
- The Jacksonville hospitality industry should employ more African Americans.
- Income disparity: blacks paid less than whites with the same skills.
- African Americans are less likely than whites to be promoted and more likely to be disciplined or terminated.

## CONSOLIDATION PROMISES

The unfulfilled promises of Consolidation contributed heavily to the myriad of issues that are persistent in districts 7, 8, 9, and 10. The failure to improve road and infrastructure in (drainage and sewer systems) has resulted in areas unsuitable for business development and business expansion.

Fifty-two years later, the districts are ignored, seemingly, by all Jacksonville politicians. A Boat dock, amphitheater, road diet, and a park on contaminated soil are poignant reminders of “a tale of two cities.”

In part, the effect of fifty-two years of neglect, unfulfilled promises, and the maldistribution of taxpayer resources has resulted in:

- Economic development stymied by 19<sup>th</sup>-century infrastructure (sidewalks, water, sewage, roads).
- Food deserts.
- A lack of affordable housing).
- Under-resourced schools.
- Poor educational outcomes.

## SUMMARY

The City of Jacksonville must appropriately address the Consolidation promises of improved roads and infrastructure. Every city administration from Hans Tanzler to the current administration headed by Lenny Curry has failed to address the plight of Northwest Jacksonville.

To be fair, the Councilpersons who have represented those districts and others in leadership roles (clergy, community activists, etc.) since Consolidation have witnessed phenomenal growth in the “Bold New City” while Urban and Northwest Jacksonville has experienced decades of economic retrograde.

The City of Jacksonville has spent millions of dollars for the removal of the ramp leading to the Isaiah Hart Bridge, razing the Jacksonville Landing, and on other “projects. It is time now for a Northwest Jacksonville “Marshall Plan” to address the economic inequities and discriminatory policy planning of the past fifty-two years.

In an emergent post-pandemic Jacksonville, we desperately need to create new paradigms and strategies to usher the residents of Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10 into 21<sup>st</sup>-century prosperity. The collective political strength of a black caucus will optimize your ability to address longstanding issues and disparities.

We realize there may be some reluctance by some councilmembers to form such a coalition because of the Sunshine Law. However, the formations of thoughts, ideas, and objectives do not require a physical assembly.

There is also a need for a black leadership roundtable that includes organization leaders well as elected officials. However, the purpose of this request is to address disparities in Districts 7, 8, 9, 10, and critical issues that are within the city council jurisdiction.

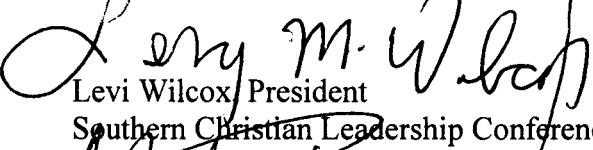
Please respond at your earliest convenience to Isaiah Rumlin.

#### SIGNATORIES



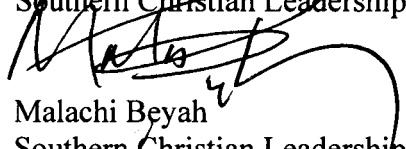
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Southern Christian Leadership Conference



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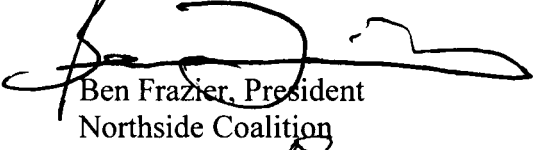
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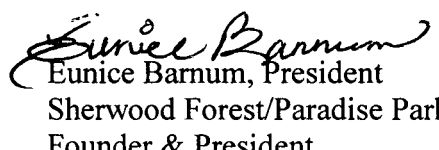
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"Take 'Em Down Jacksonville."