



B.R.E.A.D. Organization

B.R.E.A.D. Statement on Recent Killings
May 31, 2020

The recent killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police brought grief and outrage to people around the world, including people in Franklin County. This slow, brutal killing by a police officer while his colleagues watched came shortly after the killing of other African Americans, including Breonna Taylor, killed by police in Kentucky and jogger Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, by white armed civilians allegedly making a “citizen’s arrest.” This has been a horrifying string of killings of unarmed Black people at the hands of police (or ex-police).

Again and again, unjustified killings of people of color, in our community and nation, have ended without accountability or recourse. B.R.E.A.D. joins the cries of our brothers and sisters in our community and we feel called to respond.

Violence against African Americans is a horrific part of our nation’s history since before it was founded: from slavery, to lynching, to mass incarceration, often condoned or committed by police. It is no wonder this has resulted in generations of distrust that exists between law enforcement and the communities of color they are called to serve. That distrust is reinforced when the community sees no police response to large groups of men (mostly Caucasian) shouting their anger over restrictions imposed because of the coronavirus pandemic and proudly displaying weapons to make their point.

The Columbus Division of Police far too long has remained unaccountable to the community for its conduct. And the Mayor - who is elected by the people and hires the Police Chief – has not held the Columbus Police accountable. Last year, in response to community outcries, Mayor Ginther convened a Community Safety Advisory Commission which studied the problem of police misconduct and issued 80 recommendations, the majority of which have *not* been implemented. The Mayor needs to implement ALL the recommendations, especially those which strengthen police training and increase public accountability for police actions – including independent civilian review -- in order to build our community's trust.

Just as important, the Mayor needs to be more accountable to community leaders to address the other kind of violence against people of color in Columbus – a system and culture that devalues the lives of people of color and tolerates, as inevitable, dramatic disparities in employment, housing, health, wealth and quality of life among African Americans that has too long been the norm in Columbus. The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought far worse impacts on communities of color based on underlying disparities.

B.R.E.A.D. has been demanding that officials adopt proven policies and practices that challenge the status quo allowing racism to segregate our community. B.R.E.A.D. has pushed the courts and school system to adopt Restorative Justice Circles in Franklin County Juvenile Court as an alternative to incarceration and Restorative Practices in Columbus City Schools to reduce school suspensions that lead to school failure and court involvement. We are fighting for policies that will create living-wage jobs for people with criminal records, who are disproportionately African American. We are unrelenting in our campaign to get the County and City to invest in emergency rental assistance to prevent evictions during the pandemic and longer-term strategies to provide stable, permanent housing that is affordable to low-income residents. B.R.E.A.D. has pushed for years for Columbus to adopt a municipal identification (I.D.) card available to all residents, including people who have trouble obtaining a government ID such as homeless people, victims of domestic violence, older adults, immigrants, and others to enable them to have access to public services – health care, transportation, libraries – and avoid being taken into custody for a routine traffic stop.

B.R.E.A.D.'s list of issues, when taken together, forms a powerful roadmap for ending racial and economic inequity in Columbus. If our public officials are sincere about countering police violence against African Americans, they will work with community groups, including B.R.E.A.D., to hold police accountable.

We call on Mayor Ginther to meet with B.R.E.A.D. leaders about all our issues and pledge to work with us on every one of them. We also call on the Mayor to order the Chief of Police, Thomas Quinlan, to meet with B.R.E.A.D. leaders. Otherwise, their sympathetic words will fall on deaf ears.

In conclusion, B.R.E.A.D.:

Stands against the established culture that creates division between law enforcement and entire communities which will inevitably result in more needless deaths of our residents.

Will continue to work with other organizations that focus on long-term solutions to these divisions.

Will continue to work for accountability and solutions to all types of violence in our neighborhoods.

Will continue together, as people of faith, to do the hard work of justice and provide long-term solutions that will make justice possible for people in all our Central Ohio neighborhoods.

B.R.E.A.D. Rises!