



BLACK PITTSBURGH MATTERS

"Black Pittsburgh Matters Agenda" is to rebuild Black Communities for Black People by Black People with our partners as allies"

Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle

Councilman Ricky V. Burgess

September 2, 2020

Dear Vice President Biden:

Recently, you visited Pittsburgh to speak to the state of race relations and civil unrest in our country. We welcome you to our City as your presence and your support are highly valued.

As Black elected officials, we commend you for your selection of Senator and former California Attorney General Kamala Harris as your running mate, the first Black woman selected and nominated by a major political party for the position of Vice President of the United States. For this and other significant reasons, we support your candidacy.

The recent episodes of police brutality resulting in the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain and now, tragically, Jacob Blake have sparked a nationwide movement demanding that local police departments be defunded or eliminated and, in turn, making massive investments in programs that prevent poverty, crime and hopelessness.

Additionally, many Americans have acknowledged that racism is the moral and systemic cause of the adverse outcomes which so many Blacks are forced to endure, specifically, the denial of opportunities for home ownership, disparities in educational opportunities and achievement, higher rates of unemployment and an array of health disparities that unfortunately lead to the premature deaths of far too many Black people.

In Pittsburgh, one of the major consequences of systemic racism and its discriminatory practices is that the majority of Black residents live in segregated communities and many of them live in intergenerational poverty. This is due, in no small part, to the intentional withholding of economic and social capital to Black communities while, at the same time, capital has been and continues to be poured into predominately White communities.

These inequities have contributed to Black communities experiencing the aforementioned adverse outcomes along with higher crime rates, failing schools, and fewer job opportunities. Thus, the victims are trapped in multi-generational, if not permanent poverty.

Various reports have shown the effects of institutional racism in Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. For example, according to the City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission's "Pittsburgh's Inequality Across Gender and Race," Pittsburgh's Black residents could move to almost any other U.S. city of comparable size and have a better quality of life..." These negative factors affecting Black communities and their residents also negatively impact the entire metropolitan area and its ability to grow in inclusive and sustainable ways.

Recently, with the support of our mayor, William Peduto, we led the City of Pittsburgh to take two historic actions: One, the City declared racism as a public health crisis in Pittsburgh¹; and two, that *Black Pittsburgh Matters*². *Black Pittsburgh Matters* means that in Pittsburgh, Black lives, Black communities, and Black wealth matter.

As such, in Pittsburgh the health, safety and well-being of Black people *must* be protected, Black communities must be invested in and rebuilt and massive investments to secure Black employment, Black business ownership and Black homeownership must be the manifest intent of governments at all levels.

The federal government did precisely that did for White America in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's, while implicitly and explicitly denying these same investments to Black people and Black communities. The government must guarantee and fund these investments as a matter of federal law and policy.

Many of the policy pronouncements in your comprehensive, national "*Lift Every Voice*" plan for Black America are consistent with our local efforts. However, during this time of crisis, we maintain that it's important to state your clear, unambiguous and unmistakable support for communities where the majority of Black people live. Accordingly, we ask you to do three things:

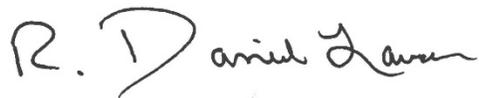
1. Come back to Pittsburgh and observe the challenges for many Black people living in America's "Most Liveable City";
2. Support Pittsburgh's "Black Pittsburgh Matters" resolution with its principles and investment strategies; and
3. Prioritize rebuilding Black communities in our country's major cities, now, and, God willing, as President of the United States.

Showing Black people that they matter and that where they live, work, worship and play matters must be a major priority for our country in this time of great racial and civil unrest. We believe that rebuilding Black families and Black communities is what justice demands of America.

Americans who call for a return to "law and order" must understand that until America accepts its responsibility for creating the injustices Black people have been subjected to, and eliminates the causes of those injustices, the unrest we are witnessing in the streets of our cities all across America will not end. As it was said in the past and remains true today, **"There can be no peace without justice."** We believe that your Presidency can and must accomplish these critical goals.

Thank you very much for your time and attention. You remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,



R. Daniel Lavelle
Pittsburgh City Council
District 6



Rev. Ricky V. Burgess
Pittsburgh City Council
District 9

1. City of Pittsburgh Resolution No. 843 of 2019
2. City of Pittsburgh Resolution No. 316 of 2020