

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

CHAIR

- City Information Management Committee

VICE CHAIR

- Licenses Committee



MILELE A. COGGS
6th District Alderwoman

MEMBER

- Finance and Personnel Committee
- Judiciary and Legislation Committee
- Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation Board
- Library Board
- Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- Special Joint Committee on the Redevelopment of Abandoned and Foreclosed Homes

From Ferguson to Milwaukee (and beyond): Broken Hearts, Broken Trust, Broken System

Statement from Alderwoman Milele A. Cogg August 21, 2014

From Ferguson to Milwaukee and across the U.S., the devaluation of Black life is widespread and at epidemic levels.

Whether it is white police officers in Ferguson or Black men on 15th & Atkinson in Milwaukee, the senseless and violent end for too many young Black souls continues on. The outrage, anger, hurt and pain that is felt with any senseless loss of life is present regardless of the race or the occupation of the offender. However, it is particularly troubling – and polarizing – when those entrusted to protect and serve the public are the ones who have taken a life.

The August 9th murder of 18-year-old African-American Mike Brown at the hands of Darren Wilson, a white City of Ferguson police officer, has sparked nights of protests and unrest in Ferguson and across the nation. Many eyewitnesses said Brown had his hands raised in submission at the time some of the fatal six bullets were fired. Brown's name is now added to the unfortunate and long list of African Americans who have lost their lives at the hands of a police officer. Several Milwaukee families know all too well the broken heart, broken trust, and broken system the Brown family is now coming to grips with. Heartbroken because no parent ever expects to bury their child, broken trust because officers are supposed to protect and serve and be allies in efforts to keep the peace, and broken “system” because of how these cases are too often handled, with the ultimate adjudication in favor of the officer (with rarely any charge or penalty) and without the justice sought by the family and the community.

As painful as it is to watch the coverage of the unrest in Ferguson, whether one wants to admit it or not, Milwaukee is just a death or two away from being Ferguson. All of the same ingredients are here: Conditions of poverty, joblessness, despair, segregation and various other racial inequities are here in Milwaukee, just as they are in a Ferguson. The death of Mike Brown was Ferguson’s spark and if Milwaukee does not make changes soon, I believe our spark is coming.

-More-

The question becomes what can be done to prevent from setting this city on fire, to fix that which is obviously broken. While the eradication of poverty, and dismantling of systemic racism and all of its vestiges will likely take generations, there are countless things we can do today to fight to improve community-police relations, demonstrate the tremendous value of all human life, and to ensure a sense of justice right now.

Whether it is pushing for the continued diversification of the Milwaukee police force, supporting the police officer body camera legislation I have introduced, continuing to hold the Fire and Police Commission accountable, limiting local police access to military grade weaponry, voting to help determine who gets elected as District Attorney and who selects the leadership in the local police department, and who truly makes our laws, or even things as simple as allowing your voice to be heard by participating in local rallies for Justice, there are so many possibilities for pushing for change.

All concerned Milwaukee residents are invited to rally for justice at two events that members of the community have collaboratively planned. The first rally will be at 4 p.m. tomorrow (Friday, August 22) at Red Arrow Park (N. Water St. and E. Kilbourn), and second rally will be at 4 p.m. on Monday (August 25) outside the Federal Building at 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.

We must do all we can from our individual vantage points communally, legislatively, in our homes, on our blocks and at the polls to change the climate and work diligently so no other families have to deal with the broken heart Mike Brown's family is dealing with right now. In turn, we must work to mend the broken trust between the community and those who are given the responsibility to protect and serve, and to fix our justice system to ensure that it makes clear that Black life is valuable.

Mending hearts, rebuilding trust and changing the justice system is not easy but it's what we must do from Ferguson to Milwaukee, and beyond.