

**Statement of Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr.
June 22, 2007**

“Racial Tensions” Not to Blame for Juneteenth Melee

Yesterday morning, I had the opportunity to defend the recent Juneteenth Day celebration and the residents of Milwaukee on CNN. As we all know, a despicable incident took place about 40 minutes after the celebration ended, when an out-of-control group of individuals assaulted Pat Kashurirangaian, who was attempting to drive home. Most of us have seen the horrific images of Mr. Kashurirangaian being beaten and kicked in the face on our television screens.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Mr. Kashurirangaian and his family.

In the CNN interview, broadcast journalist Tony Harris inferred that “racial tensions” were to blame for the beating. He characterized Milwaukee as a place of extreme racism. I disagreed with his assumption at the time, and I disagree with it today.

Milwaukee, like any major metropolitan area, faces urban issues. We face myriad challenges, such as youth violence, a daunting high school drop-out rate and teen pregnancy. As Common Council President and Alderman for the 15th District, I am always working in partnership with many to find the right solutions to these challenges.

As I’ve stated many times, individuals need to take responsibility for their decisions and their actions. “Racial tensions” did not force those young people to beat Mr. Kashurirangaian. Each of those individuals involved made extremely poor decisions, and they should be brought to justice for making those terrible choices.

Milwaukee faces many problems related to segregation and inequalities. I am not blind to the plight of the African-American community. Neither am I blind to the real problems we face as a metropolitan area.

However, the problems I cite above – as well as the incident that took place after the Juneteenth celebration – are rooted in poor choices. We do ourselves a grand disservice if we pretend that we are not responsible for our own actions.

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