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**KHALIF J. RAINEY**  
ALDERMAN, 7TH DISTRICT



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# Only time will tell if a new day is dawning in Milwaukee

## **Statement from Alderman Khalif J. Rainey June 22, 2020**

Could we see a new day dawning in Milwaukee? Only time will tell.

The protests for justice for George Floyd have turned the streets of Milwaukee and those in cities across the nation (and in some parts of the world) into rivers of thousands who are exclaiming “No Justice, No Peace,” and “We Can’t Breathe!”

The diverse throngs of marchers are standing together, with one voice, demanding justice and an end to injustices that black and brown people have been suffering for hundreds of years. The protests don’t seem to be going away anytime soon. In fact, the energy of these protests and the fact that their messages are resonating across the world brings us hope that perhaps – maybe – we have crossed a line or a barrier that could lead us to real change.

I am hopeful and buoyed by the promise of this moment, but I am also wary. Will this engagement in the call for justice and change – this energy and volume – still be here in six months?

For me, that is by far the most important question.

I know well the institutional and structural racism and injustices black and brown people here face daily, and that Milwaukee remains the worst place to live in the U.S. for African Americans. Black people in Milwaukee are living in one of the most segregated cities in the nation, and usually in crushing poverty and daily trauma. Health and educational disparities are also life as usual for most African Americans here.

When the unrest in Sherman Park took hold back in August 2016 after the fatal police shooting of Sylville Smith, I stood up and told the world that the unrest was a warning cry from a community in pain and tired of oppression. I asked if we were ready to address the racism and discrimination (and dehumanization) against African Americans here, and the byproducts that have come with those issues after several decades of little to no progress.

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The city, with tremendous support from community partners, responded with an infusion of resources and funding for Sherman Park, to help rebuild damaged buildings (cue The Sherman Phoenix), fix the streets, and repair and restore the neighborhood's housing stock. Neighbors stepped up, as did committed business owners and community stakeholders. The area that was once ablaze is by far not perfect, but it has provided us hope for future progress.

So today, with the new energy and a diverse citizenry tired of the problems and inequities that are holding back a large portion of the community and our nation, that warning has evolved into a cry for change.

We have thousands of volunteers of all colors and backgrounds stepping forward to help clean up areas where unrest left debris and litter (King Drive), and there appears to be a new spirit of engagement and support. This is truly uplifting and I hope to see it continue unabated.

I am hopeful that Milwaukee is ready for the change that we could only wonder about in 2016, and I ask my fellow citizens to join in and help us improve and transform our city at this pivotal moment in our history.

Help us push through the remaining barriers so the Milwaukee that our children and grandchildren experience is a city of hope and promise, and not one of trauma and pain.

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