



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • [www.city.milwaukee.gov](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 17, 2020

## **MEDIA ALERT**

### **Council members urge full funding for Office of African-American Affairs in 2021 budget**

In a letter sent today (**attached**) to Mayor Tom Barrett, **Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd, Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II, Alderman Cavalier Johnson, Alderwoman Marina Dimitrijevic, Alderman Nik Kovac, Alderman Robert J. Bauman, Alderman José G. Pérez and Alderwoman JoCasta Zamarripa** urge full funding for the Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA) in the mayor's proposed 2021 executive budget for the City of Milwaukee.

With thousands of African American residents of Milwaukee negatively impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and languishing under decades of segregation, discrimination and structural racism, the time has come to open fully the OAAA to provide resources to the community.

The letter states, in part: "It's been nearly four years since Alderman Khalif J. Rainey stood next to you, Alderman Russell Stamper, II, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, and Alderwoman Chantia Lewis and tried to explain to this City just how deep the hurt is for so many. Alderman Rainey talked about generational racism and the substructure of inequality that has locked too many outside, looking in at the prosperity and opportunity others enjoy. He talked about a dangerous mix of despair, anger, and fear that too many were willing to ignore until it became inconvenient. And he asked you and everyone that would listen to collaborate on real, long-term change."

It continues, in part: "From a threadbare beginning, this agency (OAAA) has begun to flourish into something that could be a promise of something better for those it serves. It is a library featuring African-American authors, a social service agency connecting people to job training and other forms of assistance, and a community center for those that want to organize around any number of causes. It will never, however, become these things if it is expected to hire people and pay them in assurances or buy needed resources with good intentions."

"We urge you to put paid to your promises. Commit to full funding for the Office of African-American Affairs."



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • [www.city.milwaukee.gov](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov)

June 17, 2020

The Honorable,  
Mayor Tom Barrett  
City Hall

Dear Mayor Barrett:

We write to you to ask that you publicly and unequivocally commit to full funding for the Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA) in your 2021 proposed executive budget.

It's been nearly four years since Alderman Khalif J. Rainey stood next to you, Alderman Russell Stamper, II, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, and Alderwoman Chantia Lewis and tried to explain to this City just how deep the hurt is for so many. Alderman Rainey talked about generational racism and the substructure of inequality that has locked too many outside, looking in at the prosperity and opportunity others enjoy. He talked about a dangerous mix of despair, anger, and fear that too many were willing to ignore until it became inconvenient. And he asked you and everyone that would listen to collaborate on real, long-term change. The newspapers wrote some of it down:

“Now what has happened tonight may have not been right; I'm not justifying that. But no one can deny the fact that there are problems, racial problems, here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, that have to be closely, not examined, but rectified. Rectify this immediately. Because if you don't, this vision of downtown, all of that, you're one day away. You're one day away.”

And now that we've all seen George Floyd murdered by a man wearing the uniform of a police officer and now that we've seen our own police officers fire OC gas and rubber bullets at peaceful demonstrators, does this community not now have the right to wonder how much of this was heard, much less learned?

We know the budget challenges we face are real. We know that we are not well treated by a legislature that denies us an equitable share of resources. That is nothing that will change in the near future. What can and must change – now – is your administration's refusal to adequately fund the OAAA. From a threadbare beginning, this agency has begun to flourish into something that could be a promise of something better for those it serves. It is a library featuring African-American authors, a social service agency connecting people to job training and other forms of assistance, and a community center for those that want to organize around any number of causes.

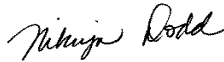
It will never, however, become these things if it is expected to hire people and pay them in assurances or buy needed resources with good intentions.

We urge you to put paid to your promises. Commit to full funding for the Office of African-American Affairs.

Respectfully,



Khalif J. Rainey,  
Alderman, 7<sup>th</sup> District



Nikiya Dodd,  
Alderwoman, 5<sup>th</sup> District



Milele A. Coggs,  
Alderwoman, 6<sup>th</sup> District



Ashanti Hamilton,  
Alderman, 1<sup>st</sup> District



Chantia Lewis,  
Alderwoman, 9<sup>th</sup> District



Russell W. Stamper, II  
Alderman, 15<sup>th</sup> District



Marina Dimitrijevic,  
Alderwoman, 14<sup>th</sup> District



JoCasta Zamarripa,  
Alderwoman, 8<sup>th</sup> District



Cavalier Johnson,  
Alderman, 2<sup>nd</sup> District



Nik Kovac,  
Alderman, 3<sup>rd</sup> District



José G. Pérez,  
Alderman, 12<sup>th</sup> District



Robert J. Bauman,  
Alderman, 4<sup>th</sup> District