



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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Change - to make or become different

Joint statement from Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II, Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, Alderman Khalif J. Rainey, Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd and Alderwoman Chantia Lewis

Over the last few months we have heard the call for change bellowed across this city, across our nation, across this world. The CHANGE being called for doesn't come easy, there are always going to be tough decisions to be made along the way: Decisions that require strong leadership and the ability to see past the immediate future and on to the big picture that lies further down the road.

Recently the Common Council voted to delay all 17 commissioners and executive level appointees of the Mayor until those appointments could answer the question “**What will you do to end systemic racism within your respective department?**” This action to delay appointments until that question could be answered was an act toward change, an act of leadership spurred by alders who represent the majority of Black and Brown people in this city and backed by those who at the time seemed to understand the importance of the question.

Yesterday, during the full Common Council meeting, unfortunately change was forced to leave the room and replaced by our city's biggest nemesis: Status quo and complacency.

When the Election Commission executive director candidate withdrew her name from consideration for the position, she showed clearly her unwillingness to answer the question at hand: “**What will you do to end systemic racism in your respective department?**”. She instead felt herself above the process and above having to answer the questions of the alders charged with representing the concerns and calls of the Black and Brown community of this city. In an email to a colleague after withdrawing her name she stated “...18-hour days is what it takes to run an election when you aren't being subjected to grandstanding...” We strongly disagree with her, because asking her and any other candidate what they plan to do to end systemic racism within their department is NOT grandstanding. It is indeed doing what the people have asked us to do which is to bring about change in a city that has been deemed the worst place in the country for African Americans to live.

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That again requires leadership and yesterday by appointing the Election Commission head and circumventing the process for appointments our Common Council President Cavalier Johnson (in a clandestine act in concert with the circumvention) was devoid of that leadership and in turn our African American citizens were robbed of the chance to ask the candidate the question at hand which bears repeating: **“What will you do to end systemic racism in your respective department?”**

With this brazen act of circumvention the Council has set the precedent that what the people have asked is, at best, inconsequential. In a time when trust is low and transparency needed, the Council decided to circumvent the people and appoint a candidate who clearly felt herself above the process. In a moment when leadership and strength was needed we instead got cowardice and weakness.

This path we are on to end systemic racism and make MILWAUKEE a great place on a Great Lake for ALL of its citizens is a long path toward change, but we won't ever get there following those that represent the status quo and complacency.