

An Open Letter from the Clergy to the Elected and Appointed Leadership of Madison and Dane County Wisconsin

We, the undersigned clergy and religious leaders in Madison and Dane County, write to you today to express our support for, and solidarity with the parents, family and friends of Tony Terrell Robinson.

We grieve the loss of one of our own, a child raised and educated in our city, a member of our community, and a member of the human family whose life ended too soon and in a manner that has shocked and disturbed us all.

We stand by Mr. Turin Carter, Tony Terrell Robinson's uncle who, speaking on behalf of the family in comments quoted in the Wisconsin State Journal, said of the ongoing investigation:

"We trust them to handle this with integrity," he said. "We want them to act strictly as fact-finders, and that's what they've assured us. We believe that and we have confidence in that."

We trust and pray that their confidence is not misplaced and that the investigation into the events of Friday night, March the sixth will be transparent, just and fair.

We also call upon you to acknowledge and respond to Mr. Carter's statement, reported in the same Wisconsin State Journal article, that:

"This issue is bigger than Tony. This highlights a universal problem with law enforcement and how its procedures have been carried out."

The Annie E. Casey and the Race to Equity Reports began the process of stripping away the veneer, exposing the racial disparities in Madison and Dane County that we have denied for so long. Tony's death has laid bare the truth that our social contract does not provide the same benefit for all members of our community; and that our policies, practices, and attitudes stack the deck against and criminalize black and brown skinned members of our community at an alarmingly disparate rate. In short, as the Cap Times Editorial Board stated on March the 9th,

"...the fact is that Madison is not the city that it should be."

These issues, the racial disparities and the lack of justice and fairness in our social and political systems transcend all boundaries of religious denomination or belief. They transcend political party and affiliation. We are all called to address these issues because they reflect upon and impact our basic humanity.

We call upon you, the people who have been entrusted with the power to effect change in the policies and practices that undergird and perpetuate the disparities in our communities, to enter into dialog with this community and with us as we do our part to address the attitudes, bias, and prejudices that allow racism to go unchallenged and unchecked in our community.

We commit to examining our own failure to challenge the racism and bias within our communities, in the ways that we do our theology, and in our failure to preach and advocate for justice and equality.

We look forward to working with you to create opportunities for that dialog and we look forward to the difference that we can make as we join together across denominational, party, and jurisdictional lines to ensure that Madison becomes the City that it should, the city that it must be.