



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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**MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN, FREE THE PEOPLE WNY COALITION AND
COMMUNITY GROUPS ANNOUNCE STEPS TO ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY
AND STRENGTHEN RESTORATIVE POLICING IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO**

Buffalo –Mayor Byron W. Brown along with community leaders, activists and concerned residents were unified in a call for an end to racial discrimination and police misconduct when they presented a series of action steps designed to reform police procedures in the City of Buffalo. Over several days, Mayor Brown met with a variety of groups to listen to their proposals and recommendations, while also sharing his ideas, for the immediate advancement of racial equity in Buffalo and Western New York. These productive and impassioned conversations resulted in a dialogue that will foster an ongoing community-driven response from the City as it works to reform its policing practices and achieve racial justice for the members of black and brown communities.

“What I learned from these conversations is that a major part of our community is in pain and action needs to be taken immediately. Advancing racial equity has to start from the grassroots of the community by listening and taking speedy action. Many people in black and brown neighborhoods of our City do not feel heard and do not immediately feel the benefits of existing racial equity practices, but they do feel the sting of over policing, so we have to do things differently,” said Mayor Brown.

“I am grateful to all of our concerned residents and the organizations and leaders that represent them for bringing their concerns directly to my administration. It has been an informative time for me to hear, not only their recommendations but also their personal, and often painful, experiences. I am committed to working with Free the People WNY Coalition, City of Buffalo Common Councilmembers, community groups, block clubs, and the clergy as we aim to advance racial equity and strengthen restorative policing in the City of Buffalo,” he said.

Following several days of meetings between the Mayor, members of his Administration, and community leaders, the following action steps will be immediately undertaken in the City of Buffalo:

- Increase the level of transparency in the Buffalo Police Department including policies for review of body camera footage;
- Make policies—including the Use of Force policy—prominently posted on the City and Police Department’s websites;
- Incorporate Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) principles into our existing community

engagement and policing activities which will further a restorative approach to community justice and divert people away from the criminal justice system whenever possible;

- Strengthen existing training programs that enhance officers' de-escalation skills, incorporating trauma-informed policing methods (to be utilized by the Crisis Intervention Team and other officers throughout the Department), and reinforcing implicit bias training;
- Convene a commission, as recommended by the Common Council and former President Barack Obama, to examine our police procedures for the purpose of making recommendations on how they may be amended to reflect restorative policing principles in addition to the work done by the Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations.

Mayor Brown also promised to look into the possibility of introducing a "Duty to Intervene" ordinance, which would reflect the "Duty to Intervene" policy that is already in the Buffalo Police Department's Use of Force policy and to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the School Resource Officer Program.

Mayor Brown also announced he will issue an Executive Order that will:

- Stop arrests for low-level, non-violent offenses in the City of Buffalo and instead will issue appearance tickets;
- Gives the explicit the ban on chokeholds in the Use of Force policy the Mayor previously announced last week the legal force of an Executive Order; and
- Replaces the Emergency Response Team's crowd control duties with a new Public Protection Unit that will work with, and ensure the safety of, any group that wants to peacefully protest in the City of Buffalo.

Kartika Carr of Free the People WNY Coalition, said, "We first want to acknowledge the mayor for being the first elected official to coordinate with our group around decarceration efforts in the city of Buffalo. White supremacy, for a long time, has oppressed people within our community. Our Free the People WNY coalition strategy team is comprised of many voices of young people and young people of color who are directly impacted by narratives and systemic oppression. Given our collective experiences, we realize the importance of liberation in a time such as this. As a collective, we—along with the community—believe that it is well past the time to push forth legislation and systemic changes that are needed in our city. With equity at the forefront, we must act to bring forth the changes that people around the world are demanding. This is the beginning stage of a new Buffalo, and we will continue to push for the mayor and other elected officials to act on behalf of the people."

Ada Hotson-Clemens of the Masten Block Club Coalition, said, "As the Masten Block Club Coalition president and the liaison to the Board of Block clubs, I am excited about the changes that are taking place. As the president of the Masten Block Club coalition and being an experienced community organizer, I have seen the work that has been done in such a short span of time, and makes me confident that this was a priority for Mayor Brown, and that we are all a part of taking great strides towards equality for the City of Buffalo."

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