



July 28, 2021

Chicago Needs to Focus on Black Lives

The city of Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives. Period.

The only way that we as a city will advance as a city as a whole, with all of its people – Black, white, Latino/Latina, Asian, Indigenous, and other – is if we value Black Lives and really focus on Black Lives.

We as a city won't make a dent in the violence in our city which is robbing so many families of loved ones unless we focus on Black Lives.

We as a city won't quickly bring down the numbers of people dying of overdoses due to heroin, fentanyl, and similar substances, unless we focus on Black Lives.

We won't change the great differences in how long a person will live in different parts of the city unless we focus on Black Lives.

We won't have great economic growth in the city as a whole unless we focus on Black Lives.

What does a focus on Black Lives look like?

First, we have to VALUE Black Lives. We have to be honest about the history of Black Lives in our country and in our city. Stories have to be told about the past and the present. Just as U.S. Capitol Police Officer Dunn testified before Congress about how he was treated by masses of people storming the Capitol Building on January 6, how he was called the N-word and worse, and how his very humanity was questioned and how the experience affects his mental health even today, our own stories in Chicago need to be told. History needs to be told, and the present-day realities of systems of racism that hold back Black people as we live as Black in America and in Chicago need to be revealed and changed.

Once value of Black Lives is established, we have to repair the harms of enslavement, not only for what has happened to our ancestors, but what continues to happen to us even in the present. Justice and reconciliation are possible when Black Lives are truly valued and repairs have occurred. History and truth need to be told, repairs made, and honest reconciliation needs to be facilitated. Justice needs to be restored.

The hard work then continues.

Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives in education, beginning in early childhood and continuing in our elementary schools and high schools and places of higher learning. A wide variety of well-resourced educational opportunities serving Black Lives, including trade schools, are needed. Schools need to teach honest history. Schools need the resources to nurture Black Lives through sports, music and the arts, and enriching trips to our own rich cultural resources in our city and beyond.

Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives in economic opportunities. Many, many Black entrepreneurs need capital to make their dream of owning a viable business and making their communities vibrant. A focus on Black Lives makes our majority Black communities true destinations for consumers and visitors.

Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives in housing. So many lost their housing through predatory lending practices and the housing crash of 2008 that is still affecting our communities. So many need housing with the supports they need to help with their serious mental illness or to help in their process of recovery from using substances such as heroin/fentanyl. So many families could build wealth for themselves and their children if there was an end to discriminatory lending and housing practices that are still happening to this day.

Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives in law enforcement. Creating accountability in law enforcement will save Black Lives; help the many hard-working police who are trying to do the right thing; help to solve crimes that families want solved; save tax-payers millions of dollars from settling lawsuits; and create a sense of safety and well-being in our communities.

And, Chicago needs to focus on Black Lives in mental health. The trauma and challenges faced by Capitol Police Officer Dunn is being addressed through counseling. So many others, including Black Lives in Chicago, need to have their traumas addressed and treated for them to move forward in life, not only for themselves but for their families.

Let's create a laser focus on Black Lives in Chicago.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District