

Dear Mayor Donahue and City Council Members –

It has been gratifying to see the response of many in the North Liberty community, our city government and our police department to the cruel and inhumane murder of George Floyd by Minnesota police.

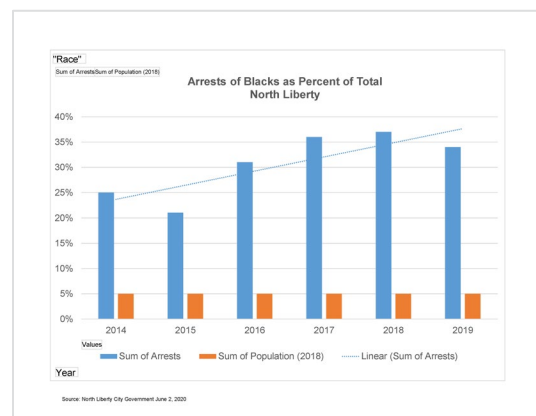
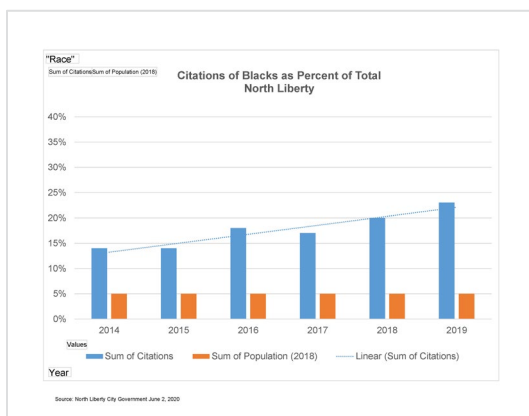
I see our community speaking out against this horrific act of police brutality as well as the great suffering and harm that systemic racism brings to our black friends and neighbors.

I appreciate the public response as well as the attendance of our Mayor, some Councilors and our Chief of Police at the protest held at Penn Meadows last week. Thank you.

However, speaking out is not enough. Attending a protest is not enough. We must develop concrete and specific plans and strategies to combat racism in our community. Work must be done at all levels, from private business practices to public policies covering education, housing, policing and more.

Today, I am asking you to take steps that address policing. Specifically:

1. **Implement policies and tracking systems that prevent the over-policing of black people in our community.** Data released by the City indicates that while black people represent approximately 5% of our residents, they represent 23% of police citations and 34% of arrests. The proportion of citations of black residents is at a 6-year high. While the proportion of arrests of black citizens is down slightly, it remains on an upward trend over six years. [Studies](#) indicate that the overrepresentation of specific groups in crime statistics is not because they are higher offenders, but rather because they are over-targeted. I am asking the City to immediately implement policies requiring our police department to reduce the over-targeting of our black residents and to reverse the clear trends of over-policing of our black community.



2. **Implement policies that reduce and restrict the use of force by police in our community.** We may already have some of these policies in place. Specifically, to immediately adopt the policies promoted by 8cantwait.org, as research shows these policies save lives:
 - i. **Ban chokeholds, strangleholds, and other neck restraints in all cases.**

- ii. **Require officers to de-escalate** situations, where possible, by communicating with subjects, maintaining distance, and otherwise eliminating the need to use force.
- iii. **Require officers to give a verbal warning** in all situations before using deadly force.
- iv. **Require officers to exhaust all other alternatives**, including non-force and less lethal force options, prior to resorting to deadly force.
- v. **Require officers to intervene** and stop excessive force used by other officers and report these incidents immediately to a supervisor.
- vi. **Ban officers from shooting at moving vehicles** in all cases, which is regarded as a particularly dangerous and ineffective tactic.
- vii. **Establish a use of force continuum** that restricts the most severe types of force to the most extreme situations and creates clear policy restrictions on the use of each police weapon and tactic.
- viii. **Require officers to report each time they use force or threaten to use force** against civilians. Comprehensive reporting includes requiring officers to report whenever they point a firearm at someone, in addition to all other types of force.

I have been a resident of North Liberty for 19 years. While my biracial family and I have generally felt safe here, it pains me to know that the same is not true for all of our neighbors; that many feel unfairly targeted.

It pains me to hear people in our community say that our police officers don't care about them, don't want to know them and don't want to establish relationships with them. I know that relationship-building is not a skill that is easily mandated by policy but I would encourage our police department to increase their engagement and outreach to residents on a personal level.

To our police officers, I want to say that I know you have difficult jobs and that I value and support you. At the same time, I know we can all do better. We must do better. The time is now to make meaningful and lasting change toward a more just and equitable society for everyone. We are all part of the solution.

Mayor, City Council and other members of the community in attendance today, thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing your response to this request.

Sincerely,

Kelly Smith
365 Lockview Avenue

Dear Mayor Donahue and City Council Members-

First and foremost, I want to thank you all for the most recent communications and transparency around the community response to the George Floyd tragedy.

I am a mother of three children here in North Liberty and have lived here for 7 years. My older two children are genetically mine, but my youngest son is adopted and has been our child since he was 5 days old and I am so proud to be his mother. He does not look like my other children and as he has said since he first noticed the difference that he is "brownish", and mommy is kind of "pinkish."



As I watch the tragedies unfold across our nation on the daily, I am reminded that my sweet, young innocent child will soon grow into the stature and appearance of many of these black, male victims of racial profiling and police brutality.

You see, my oldest son is white and 20 years old, 6'4" and 200 lbs. Not once have I worried for his safety in our community. He can run freely in a hoodie for exercise, he is not pulled over when he plays his music loudly while driving, he is not watched in stores as he shops.

But as my younger black son grows into a man I know he will not be graced with the same freedoms and **THAT IS WRONG**. These two boys have grown up with the **EXACT** same upbringing, parents. Influences and love. They are **BOTH** my sons. The only difference between them is how the world views them.

Does it make any sense at all that I am terrified to allow my sweet, charming 8-year-old to just run around freely in this town? I hope it's as soul crushing for you as it is for me to think that anyone would see his smiling face as anything but the loveable, smart, kind and caring boy I see.

I need you to hear my voice and the voices of mothers of black children in North Liberty. We cannot have a world where my two boys are treated differently only because of their skin color.

I know I am not alone with this worry, especially when I review the data you have released.

The City of North Liberty data indicates that while black people represent approximately **5% of our residents**, they represent **23% of police citations** and **34% of arrests**. Why is this happening?

The proportion of citations of black residents is at a **6-year high**. (While the proportion of arrests of black citizens is down slightly, it remains on an upward trend over six years.)

Most studies indicate that the overrepresentation of specific groups in crime statistics is not because they are higher offenders, but rather because they are over-targeted.

I am asking the City of North Liberty to IMMEDIATELY implement policies requiring our police department to reduce the over-targeting of our black residents and to reverse the clear trends of over-policing of our black community.

I am asking you this as a concerned citizen, a concerned community member of our black community, and most of all a terrified mother of a black son.

Sincerely,
Jessica Baker
1955 Silver Maple Trail
North Liberty, IA