

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People  
Contact: Omar Beasley, Chairman  
Cell Phone: (919) 201-6398  
Email: Obeasley2@gmail.com  
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### **The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People calls for a community wide conversation involving race, racism and symbols.**

Durham County needs to talk about race, racism and how we feel about symbols. It's long overdue and it should have happened before my children had to witness the resurgence of white supremacy.

Durham is a county known for longstanding bonds that help residents transcend the damage of institutionalized hate. We are a community that has effectively and persistently modeled what it means to be a beloved community. Although tainted by the images of hate, Durham has historically endured as a witness of the unlimited potential within communities committed to building beyond differences.

We have not always gotten it right. Like other communities across the state and nation, residents in Durham have borne the burden of conflicting ideas and agendas. We have suffered the consequences of mistakes that complicate relationships. We have witnessed the continued impact of images that remind us of slavery and the hatred that stirred the will to demoralize black citizens. We have read and heard brutal words that divide us more than ever before.

Durham is not a perfect place, but it belongs to us. We, as residents of Durham, are now given the challenge to overcome the grips of our historical mistakes. All of us are called to lead in ways that press us beyond the power of symbols and rhetoric aimed at keeping us divided. We deserve better than this.

Thus, as Chairman of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, I challenge residents of Durham to serve a more powerful witness. I challenge residents to trust the hearts of those appointed to lead. Trust the black men and women who serve the county. Trust them to resolve the matter involving the vandalism of the Confederate statute in a way that draws from the passion of their experiences as black people. Trust that they will be guided by their integrity to the office in which they serve.

The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People calls for a more powerful community witness. We are mindful of the angst that led protestors to pull the Confederate soldier to the ground. We are uniquely aware of the pain that stirred the emotions. We have carried that same agony fueled by memories of our ancestor's bondage. We have bore witness to the will of white supremacy in our lifetime and now I have to explain this to my children to help them understand why we live with it every day.

Simply viewing these statues/memorials are a constant battle that lingers in the subconscious of Black People. These are symbols aimed at demoralizing Black People. They challenge the integrity of our dreams. They have stood only to remind Black People of the impact of Jim Crow Era, when they were placed here. The Confederate soldier stood in the shadow of The Black Wall Street as if to remind black residents the Ku Klux Klan is still here.

The statute and others like it are the burdens of Black People. This is our battle with history. These are brutal symbols of hate. The members of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People are indebted to all advocates of change. We are grateful for the witness of millennials for taking matters into their own hands. We are reminded of the scores of white residents who fight to end institutionalized racism.

But these symbols reflect more than their presence evoke. We seek to end all forms of hate. We challenge the hidden images of racism.

- The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People appreciates the support of organizations with predominately white leadership. We support their advocacy on behalf of Black People and look forward to working to establishing more meaningful collaborations.
- The mission of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People is to propose, implement and to advance public policies that impact Black Citizens. Any dialogue involving public policy decisions involving the Confederate statue devoid of input from the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People fails to honor and respect the history and legacy of our work.
- The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People honors and respects the leadership of District Attorney Roger Echols, County Manager Wendell Davis and the Black men and women who serve as members of the Board of County Commissioners. We affirm their witness as Black People and believe in their will to resolve this matter.
- We question all movements designed to press an agenda that compromises the process outlined by the District Attorney and Board of County Commissioners.
- We challenge movements that hide behind statutes while silencing the voices of Black People.

We call for dialogue that moves us beyond massive assumptions. We are not listening to one another. Feelings are being hurt. Mistakes are being made. More than anything, we are moving further from the dream of our common witness.

As I challenge our residents to trust our Black leaders, I do not ask for your silence. I'm asking us to speak loudly. I'm asking us to eradicate the hidden hate. Rather than push agendas aimed at addressing the power of the Confederate statute, let's address the madness within.

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