#BLACKLIVESMATTER

#THEWORLDISWATCHING

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN SOLIDARITY

STATEMENT ON SHOOTINGS IN KENOSHA, WISCONSIN

SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

Our hearts ache and we grieve deeply for the tremendous loss that the people of Kenosha, Wisconsin have experienced over the past few weeks. On August 23, 2020, Jacob Blake was filmed being shot seven times in the back by police officers, in a video that has gone viral like countless others before it. While details of the incident are still forthcoming, Jacob's shooting follows the well-known pattern of Black people in the United States being brutalized by authorities on camera, giving rise to protests and calls for change that too often fall upon deaf ears. From Eric Garner to Ahmaud Arbery to Breonna Taylor to George Floyd and now Jacob Blake, this is a story that happens again and again in communities across our country.

It is unfortunately because we see these incidents so often, through the recording of cell phone cameras, that so many have rallied strongly behind the mission of ending police brutality and systemic racism. After and through years of immense pain and suffering, the movement for Black lives has become the largest civil rights movement in history, with protests spanning the globe and decision-makers at every level re-evaluating how we got here. Change happens when communities pool their time, skills, and pain to advocate for what's right. The progress we have made over the past few months is immense and entirely owed to the courage and persistence of community activists demanding, *not one more.*

Change happens when people organize—and organizing necessitates protest. To those mischaracterizing protests as riots or unnecessary unrest, we offer to you the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., written in an Alabama jail cell 57 years ago: "You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham, but your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations."

The people of Kenosha were protesting. They were mourning. And on the evening of August 25, a 17-year old shooter from outside the community, Kyle Rittenhouse, invaded their grief with an AR-15 style .223 rifle. He did not belong, yet he came and brought gun violence with him. He took Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum away from their families and away from Kenosha, and wounded Gaige Grosskreutz. He is part of a dangerous trend of armed citizens invading Black communities in grief, to add pain when they are already suffering in ways they cannot understand or simply refuse to empathize with. This prevents these communities from effectively organizing. It steers our narratives away from the many Black people who have died or been critically harmed by the system, and instead forces our stories to be re-centered around the intrusion.

To the people of Kenosha, we grieve and stand with you. We deplore those who would violently infringe upon or mischaracterize the pain of your community. We will shortly contact relevant officials to express this, and hope you may find even greater courage and strength despite the injustices you have endured time and time again. We are with you.

Black Lives Matter. The World Is Watching.

Please click here for a list of ways you can help support the Kenosha community and Jacob Blake's family. Please click here for a comprehensive list of resources to support the movement for Black lives.