



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Khalif J. Rainey, District 2

May 27, 2014

Gov. Scott Walker
Ms. Mary Burke

Dear Candidates for Governor,

I am writing to express my utmost concern regarding racial disparities in Wisconsin. To be blunt, Wisconsin's African-American community is in a state of emergency.

According to a December 2013 report from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), Wisconsin is home to "extreme racial disparity," compared with other states, in economic opportunity, education and incarceration rates. According to the report: "Wisconsin has the regrettable distinction of ranking among the worst states in the nation in terms of racial equality."

Significant findings in the report include:

- Wisconsin has the largest African-American deficit relative to labor force participation in the nation.
- Wisconsin black families are 5.7 times more likely than white families to live in poverty, second in the U.S.
- Wisconsin has the largest disparity in the nation of high school completion among blacks and whites, and it has some of the lowest eighth grade math scores.
- Wisconsin posts the highest black male incarceration rate in the nation at 12.8 percent -- nearly double the national rate.

Other racial disparities in Wisconsin's African-American community are no less alarming. For example, infants born to African-American women are three to four times more likely to die before their first birthday than infants born to white women. In addition, African-American infant mortality rates have not improved over the past 20 years. This is shameful.

Wisconsin's racial inequality is, in fact, dramatically more distinct than in other states. The strength of the economy, the prosperity of the state, and health and well-being of all our communities are threatened by the racial disparities that plague Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, gun violence and violent crime in general continue to plague the black community, particularly in the City of Milwaukee. Shortly after a recent gun buy-back program in Milwaukee, multiple shootings occurred. In addition, an innocent little girl was gravely injured in crossfire. Clearly, there is a dire need in the black community to address this kind of violence on the front and back end of this chronic problem.

We *desperately* need your leadership to address this epidemic.

It is clear to see that Wisconsin's African American community for quite some time has been, and still is, truly in a "state of emergency."

As gubernatorial candidates, please share with me some of your short and long range plans, visions and ideas to address the violence and unacceptable disparities between African Americans and the rest of the residents of Wisconsin. I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Khalif J. Rainey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'K' and 'R'.

Khalif J. Rainey
Milwaukee County Supervisor
2nd District