

CANDIDATE CHRISTOPHER KRUGER'S STATEMENT ON THE TRAGIC SHOOTING OF JACOB BLAKE, JR.



Illinois Green Party

I had the privilege of attending a rally in Evanston this past Tuesday¹ to protest the shooting of former Evanstonian and graduate of Evanston Township High School Jacob Blake Jr. I have learned more about Mr. Blake's family and its extensive contributions to the Evanston community over three (or four?) generations. It is quite impressive what a family can accomplish when it is dedicated to improving the community and consecrates itself to the job, and I have great admiration for their achievements.

I pray for the full recovery of Jacob Blake and for justice, not only in his case, but in all cases involving the unjustified use of excessive force. But police reform, while essential, is not enough.

Congresswoman Jan Shakowsky addressed the crowd, and spoke of the urgency of passing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. I thank the Congresswoman for her show of support for the Evanston community.

I additionally support all the measures in that proposal, but the bill does not go far enough in addressing the causes, as opposed to the symptoms, of racialized violence in our divided and polarized society.

In fact, it is what the Congresswoman did not mention that speaks volumes about the problems of race, class, and division in America, and about the inadequacies and the failure of the two-party system; absent from her speech was any mention of:

- Reparations-
- Mass Incarceration-
- The Democratic presidential candidacy of Joe Biden.

The Congresswoman did not mention Reparations. It is no accident or coincidence that so many of the approximately 1000 people killed by police each year are young African American males; while there is no national database, it is known that African Americans are twice as likely to be shot as whites. And it is no accident or coincidence that those persons are, overwhelmingly, the descendants of America's shameful, enduring legacy of slavery. Unless and until the injustice of slavery is rectified, there will indeed be "No Justice, No Peace."

That is why I will propose the formation of an "Illinois' Reparations, Truth and Reconciliation Commission." That Commission will consist of community leaders, academics, attorneys and others with expertise in Constitutional, Civil Rights, and International Human Rights law as well as the economics of Black wealth. These commissioners will be appointed from the Black community, and possess personal connections and familiarity with the persistent impediments to Black financial and

¹ Note: this article was drafted prior to the tragic shootings of three protesters, resulting in the death of two persons, by 17 year old Kyle Rittenhouse. I unequivocally condemn this and all acts of vigilante violence, and extend my condolences to the victims of this unspeakable tragedy.

social parity with their fellow Americans. The job of the Commission will be to draft legislative proposals to systematically repair, restore, and finally achieve full economic and social justice for African Americans.

The Congresswoman also did not mention the problem of Mass Incarceration. Municipal police are only the first gatekeepers, serving as intake workers in the Mass Incarceration assembly-line that the two establishment parties created in the 1990s with the passage of the Omnibus Crime Bill, and with the enthusiastic support of corporate, centrist Democrats. Our country is now the most incarcerated nation, *per capita*, in the world.

Ironically, in more recent times certain Republicans like former governor Bruce Rauner (who set a goal of reducing Illinois prison populations by 25%, and accomplished roughly half of that) and President Trump (who signed the First Step Act) are now seeing and acknowledging that the expense of unnecessary incarceration is good money thrown away where non-violent offenders are concerned. Clearly, reducing incarceration is in the interest of all citizens and taxpayers.

That is why I will fight for Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform, which will aid in transforming policing from its present role as an adversarial expression of our over-militarized national culture into a preventative Public Safety model and into a conduit to help citizens access social services and establish a model of Restorative Justice.

We will end Mass Incarceration by releasing non-violent offenders and continue to de-criminalize or de-felonize non-violent offenses, and by establishing a Restorative Justice model to bring offenders and victims together, and to compensate victims and the community to reach closure and finality.

We will hold police offenders legally accountable while demilitarizing the police (and removing surplus military equipment); reprioritizing the departments' missions; and giving Public Safety Officers access to support such as regular behavioral health assistance and counseling, mandating such services to officers in contact with at-risk communities. We will, in a compassionate manner, make certain that military veterans who serve as peace officers are not suffering from stress or combat-related PTSD, thereby endangering the public as well as themselves and their families

Which brings us to Point 3: Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden. Legislating is a political activity, and Congresswoman Shakowsky's efforts to focus attention solely on police reform, instead of attacking systemic white supremacy head-on and fighting for economic rights for all Americans, is a political ploy, deflecting responsibility away from the Democrats.

Candidate Biden was himself, working with segregationist Republicans, a prime proponent and advocate of some of the worst legislation affecting African Americans, such as the aforementioned Omnibus Crime Bill; draconian Welfare "Reform" which impoverished thousands of African American women and children; and Bankruptcy "Reform" which made student debt non-dischargeable and falls disproportionately on Black students who take on larger debt and have lower graduation rates because of the lack of intergenerational wealth in the community.² The list goes on and on.

² See for example <https://tcf.org/content/report/bridging-progressive-policy-debates-student-debt-racial-wealth-gap-reinforce/?agreed=1> (Visited 8/28/20).

African Americans are a core constituency of the Democratic Party, and yet the mega-rich donors who control that party (and are often the same donors to the Republican Party) are not yet ready to part with the billions that they owe to thousands of families, American families like the Blakes, who have endured 12-15 generations of enslavement, economic oppression, segregation, Jim Crow, lynching, and housing and employment discrimination. And Joe Biden assured his Wall Street donors early in his campaign that "nothing will substantially change" after his election. We should believe him.

I have no doubt that the Congresswoman knows that Reparations, an end to Mass Incarceration, and Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform are just and are necessary, but that her membership in an donor-dominated establishment party in an election year prohibits her from speaking out. Focusing on the police is a dodge, exchanging one scapegoat (the Republicans' "anarchy" narrative concerning the protesters, which ignores the reality of police wrong-doing) for another (fixing policing will solve the problem of systematic racism and social/economic inequality).

Diversity is a sham unless it is accompanied by economic rights. One who studies our history, our Constitution, the Civil War and Reconstruction will quickly conclude that, as Dr. Cornel West says, "Black faces in high places" will not, by itself, produce economic or social justice for the millions of Americans left behind by the past 40 years of the exploding wealth inequality that is, sadly, America in the Twenty-First Century.

Instead of fighting for meaningful economic rights for all Americans, the Democrats have nominated a President and Vice-Presidential candidate (a former prosecutor and mass incarcerator herself), who are not only comfortable with the status quo, but have a history of boosting the political and economic power of the mega-rich and suppressing the progressive elements within both the Black community and the community at large.

As your candidate for State Representative, I urge you to examine my candidacy and the candidacies of my colleagues in the Green Party. In this electoral cycle, voters will have more options for more offices than usual, including those for President and Vice-President, U.S. Senate, State Representative and the Metropolitan Water District. This is an opportunity for Illinoisans to declare independence from two-party tyranny.

As Rev. Jesse Jackson Jr., the first African American to run a viable campaign for United States President has said, "Vote your hope, not your fear."

#Justice4Jacob!

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