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**The Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)**

**And the Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence (CAV) Address the Recent Surge of Shootings in**

**African American Communities**

**Tuesday, August 14, 2018 – 9:15 am**

**Freedom Unlimited, Inc.**

**Many people in the Pittsburgh Region are aware that the**

**Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) and the**

**Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence (CAV) have**

**joined with numerous individuals and organizations who have called for “Justice for Antwon Michael Rose, II” who was killed at the hands of East Pittsburgh police officer Michael Rosfeld on July 19, 2018. We continue that call. This past weekend I spoke with the Hon. Tom Wolf, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, while he was visiting Braddock, Pennsylvania and informed him of B-PEP’s advocacy in behalf of “Justice for Antwon”, and our push for adoption of the Due Process Act for cases involving the death of citizens at the hands of police or correctional officers. Our extensive packet of communications to area political leaders and police officials on these issues was emailed to the Governor on Monday, August 13tth regarding our proposals of action. In addition, we encourage people to peaceably be present at 9:00 am in room 519 of the County Courthouse for the arraignment of East Pittsburgh officer Michael Rosfeld as we collectively seek the next step for “Justice for Antwon”.**

**2.**

**But the focus of *this* press conference is to address the unacceptable level of violence that has hit the Pittsburgh area from Friday, August 3, 2018 through Monday, August 13, 2018. As intense and outrageous as our reactions might be, and have been, to the absolutely unnecessary and tragic death of 17 year old Antwon Michael Rose, II, we must also show that *same* level of upset when African Americans are shot and/or killed at the hands of Black people. Violence and death is simply *not* acceptable, be it violence of police officers against Black citizens, Black violence on police officers, or what has traditionally been called “Black on Black Violence”.**

**The following is “The Week That Was”:**

* **Friday, August 3rd a 20 year old man was shot multiple times while sitting in his car in the parking lot of the Super Stop Convenience Store in Rankin, Pennsylvania. He survived.**
* **On Saturday, August 4th a woman was shot in the arm and a man was shot in the hand when they were caught in a crossfire in the Greenfield Giant Eagle Parking Lot while taking groceries to their car.**
* **Around 30 minutes later on that same date there was a second incident on Greenfield Avenue at the intersection of Lilac Street and Beechwood Boulevard. A witness said that there were several shots fired into the driver side of a green jeep. The driver took himself to Mercy Hospital. A female witness stated that two children were in the backseat of the Jeep. She helped the little girl who had glass and blood on her face while in the emergency room.**
* **A man was found lying on the street after being shot multiple times this past Sunday morning in the 7700 block of Frankstown Avenue at around 2:10 am. He was hospitalized in critical condition.**

**3.**

* **On Sunday, August 12th three females and one male were shot in the block of 6600 Broad Street in East Liberty. As of yesterday, they were all in stable condition.**
* **On Monday, August 13th Elaine Pearson was found dead inside a parked SUV when police arrived at 5:30 am in the 1500 block of Lincoln Avenue.**
* **Fifty-five year old Donnell Demery was shot in the early hours of August 13th at the 1313 Bar located on Kennedy Avenue in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, and later died. Another person was shot as well.**
* **A man was shot early Monday morning along Bedford Avenue in the Hill District. As of yesterday, he was in critical condition.**

 **The Black Political Empowerment Project and the Greater**

 **Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence felt that such a week of**

 **violence cried out for a response, as did the rest of us present**

 **at this press conference. We *cannot*, as citizens of the**

 **Pittsburgh region, become *numb* to the death of our people. We**

 **cannot accept shootings and death as an acceptable new reality**

 **for our communities. We urge our young people, as well as our**

 **adults, to please seek alternatives to violence when faced with a**

 **conflict or a disagreement. Seek mediation. Seek a neutral**

 **party to intercede. We urge us all to begin to value**

 **life. The term “Black Lives Matter” must mean not only that**

 **police to respect Black lives, but also for African Americans to**

 **do the same! As Valerie Dixon, B-PEP’s Vice Chair & our**

 **Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence Co-convener,**

 **stated to me yesterday, we must begin holding ourselves**

 **accountable.**

**4.**

 **As I have mentioned on several occasions in the past, many of**

 **the people in our poor communities do not just wake up**

 **‘dysfunctional’. There are reasons for the conditions that**

 **continue to exist which keep our communities very poor and**

 **in need of bold solutions and creative approaches to break the**

 **negative cycles which have such deep roots in us as a people,**

 **and how communities operate. Unfortunately,**

 **inequalities and inequities have become the norm and not**

 **the exception. It was in this backdrop that B-PEP’s**

 **Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable (CEIR) hosted its**

 **Sixth Annual CEIR Conference on Monday, June 25, 2018**

 **at Duquesne University hosted by Mayor Bill Peduto, County**

 **Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Allegheny Conference on**

 **Community Development CEO Stefani Pashman, in**

 **partnership with area corporate, university, college and**

 **non-profit leaders. CEIR has crafted a blueprint for action:**

 **The CEIR Executive Summary and the Pittsburgh/**

 **Southwestern PA Initiative for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.**

 **We call upon leaders in all of these sections of life to examine**

 **this blueprint, embrace it and put into action as part of the**

 **culture throughout the Pittsburgh Region, including all of our**

 **area political, corporate and higher education leaders. This**

 **blueprint for action can be accessed through the CEIR website,**

[**www.ceirpittsburgh.org**](http://www.ceirpittsburgh.org) **or through ceiroundtable@gmail.com.**

 **We call upon *all* citizens of our community, regardless of age,**

 **race, orientation, or status in life, to get actively involved in**

 **finding ways to implement the more than 800 anti-violence**

 **strategies contained in B-PEP’s Greater Pittsburgh Coalition**

 **Against Violence document: “Strategies for Change; Building**

 **More Peaceful Communities”. The next meeting of the CAV**

 **Working Group will take place next Tuesday, August 21, 2018**

 **at 11:00 am at our B-PEP Headquarters at Freedom**

 **Unlimited, Inc., 2201 Wylie Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.**

**5.**

 **People can go to our Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against**

 **Violence (CAV) website at www.coalitionagainstviolence.net.**

 **to access the entire document, or sections thereof, or call us**

 **at 412-212-8775 or at 412-758-7898.**

 **We are happy to announce that UPMC, through Dr. James**

 **Taylor, Chief Diversity, Inclusion & learning Officer and**

 **Susan Biada, Director, Community Engagement, have agreed**

 **to print and help distribute our new third edition of our CAV**

 **Community Services Directory which will identify needed**

 **services for those directly impacted by violence.**

 **We are happy to have with us today Esther L. Bush, President**

 **and CEO, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, Richard**

1. **Stewart, Jr., President, NAACP Pittsburgh Unit, Chief Scott**

**Schubert, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, Asst. Chief Lavonnie**

**Bickertaff, Valerie Dixon, Director of Family & Community**

**Support for the Center for Victims, Executive Director, the PACT Initiative, B-PEP Vice Chair, Co-convener, Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence and mother who has lost her only son to violence, Rev. Cornell Jones, Group Violence Intervention Coordinator, City of Pittsburgh, Taili Thompson, Violence Prevention Coordinator, Allegheny County Health**

**Department Office of Violence Prevention, Rob Conroy, Director of Organizing, CeaseFirePA, and Sharon McIntosh, B-PEP/CAV Youth Summit Coordinator/Anti-Violence Advocate.**

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