



Lafayette Parish NAACP UNIT #6060
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Marja Broussard, President

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“Our Lafayette Parish community has been grieving the loss of too many young men killed by gun violence, whether it be from an officer-related shooting or at the hands of each other. On October 15, at approximately 1 or 2 a.m, while attending a party at Moore Park, four members of our young community were shot, leaving two lifeless and two injured. A party that had about 200-300 teenagers, equipped with a DJ, no supervision, no permit, and no security.

“During these exceptionally difficult and emotional times for Blacks across the country, we must ensure that we are doing all we can to support our brothers, sisters, and community members - young and old. Support requires a community effort, from the highest leader of the city-parish, members of community organizations, parents, and every citizen. This is a community issue. And while we as a community and as leaders are working to address this culture within our youth to use guns to address anger, lack of safe areas for eager teens to party, we need our city government community of elected officials, starting with our Mayor-President, and law enforcement to do their part in keeping them safe.

“We believe funding the community doesn’t necessarily mean defunding the police; the NAACP recognizes the need for partnerships with law enforcement and those dedicated to protecting and serving. But it has to be well thought-out and productive; it has to be collaborative. Two teenagers died. Two teens might still be alive if some sort of security was there that night. Two teens might still be alive if the officers who showed up to the scene stayed long enough to make sure every single person there had left. But that didn’t happen. We want to know why. We urge Mayor-President Josh Guillory to also ask why.

“The Park Police played a big role in picking up where law enforcement agencies couldn’t. They were the eyes and ears of the parks. They enforced policies and procedures, and called on the police as needed to enforce the laws. Park Police monitored social activity and knew if there was a party, when and where, and showed up to break those parties up. During the August 2020 budget cut meetings, when we expressed our concerns multiple times, we were assured

that law enforcement could handle the park surveillance. Hopefully now, everyone sees we were right in our concerns.

“So, while the problem lies with teens accessing guns without proper knowledge and discipline of how to use them, or address anger and frustrations that systemically plague our community, we must equally hold our officials accountable for failing in their part as well. As community leaders we have been doing our part through various youth organizations and initiatives. We demand the Lafayette Consolidated Government to do theirs. Since the police departments responsible failed to pick up the slack left with the elimination of Park Police, the NAACP now returns to its repeated demand to reinstate the Park Police program immediately.

“As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, *“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”* To not do anything is being neutral. To keep the status quo is being neutral. There has been a great injustice to our youth. What happened in the early hours of October 15 should never happen again.”

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