

For Immediate Release: 7/20/2020

## Regarding the Weekend of Occupy the Block, the John Lewis and CT Vivian Vigil, and Our Movement in Winston-Salem

Organizers intend to maintain the occupation until our demands are met. Those demands are as follows:

1. Respond to all questions posed by TAP and UC (outlined below)
2. Make relevant policy changes in the FCDC around protocol for inmates in medical distress
3. Make relevant policy changes around transparency and accountability in deaths of citizens in custody of the county (including in FCDC and other guardianship situations)
4. Dismiss all charges against protesters from July 8 and July 9 arrests

We have not received a response from Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough nor DA Jim O'Neill and do intend to continue the occupation until our demands are met.

Occupy the Block (#OccupyWSNC) is now approaching the end of its sixth day of occupying downtown Winston-Salem to demand transparency and explanations regarding the cover up of Mr. John Elliott Neville's murder in Forsyth County Detention Center in December 2019. The North Carolina chapter of the ACLU is closely monitoring the situation, and continues to support our efforts. Organizations and speakers included over the weekend (days 4, 5, and 6) were Housing Justice Now, The United States of Racism, Vote on Purpose, Black Ops, Elizabeth Doub on trauma therapy, Carmen Green (VP of the National Birth Equity Collaborative), Hate Out of Winston, the Democratic Socialist Association of Winston-Salem, Ashley Johnson (photography), and more. Steady Hype returned to provide a performance. Reverend Willard Bass and Dr. Derek Hicks led a vigil for John Lewis and C.T. Vivian, two freedom fighters who passed away on the 17th of July. The nights of Saturday and Sunday were closed with dance and music by an African drummer.

Occupiers and organizers are engaging in intentional community-building through self (care), educational, and recreational activities. We have provided occupiers with lunch and dinner each day, as well as snacks and beverages, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, and PPE. We have made clear that "joy is paramount to the movement," and are proud that despite the extreme heat and exhaustion of maintaining a multi-day occupation, we are experiencing joy. Occupiers have shared what has brought them the most joy during the occupation, including "the love and good vibes of everyone participating gives me hope for the future," "creating community within this community," "feeling protected and supported by the organizers and protesters," being "welcomed with open arms," and "meeting amazing folks and hearing inspirational speeches from people who are passionate about the cause." One occupier described their joys more fully, saying:

I have really low self esteem when it comes to learning and education. Being out at occupy has made me feel like not only can I get over that, but that I need to. Because this isn't about me. And I need to, so I can. And that brings me so much joy. I feel smart and like I can apply myself to something that matters for the first time in years. Learning from y'all gives me so much joy. Hearing everyone's stories. Learning from comrades. In

return, feeling myself being able to rise up and teach myself more and more every night, branching off from topics discussed through the day. That brings me such unimaginable joy. And the joy I feel hearing those taps [taps on the windows by the incarcerated folks during our nightly marches to the Forsyth County Detention Center? Good lord. Y'all know. Seeing our siblings in the detention center and knowing we're making a difference in the day. So much joy. I know this isn't really a concise list because I'm all in my feelings tonight but in short I am feeling more joy and hope because of #occupywsnc than I have in precisely a year. Thank y'all so much.

#OccupyWSNC would not be possible without the support of our amazing community. We owe a great debt to the following businesses: Acadia Foods, Burger Supreme, Coffee Park Airstream, Dye Pretty, Fair Witness, Fools Gold Honey, Krankies, Project Mask, Salem Organic Supply, Single Brothers, Sunshine Beverages, Tate's, Public House, and The Porch.

### **Our Questions**

*Why are you covering up a murder?*

We demand answers to all of the following questions: Why has Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough not publicly addressed any changes to policy that were made after Neville's death? Was Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough at any time on the scene during the hog tying of Neville? Why has the hog tie remained an acceptable restraint in Forsyth County when it has been banned in the majority of police precincts across the country years ago? Have there been any changes in the medical provider since Neville's death? How many other deaths have occurred at the detention center since the death of Neville? Have there been changes to the handcuff policies of sick inmates? When was the last time the FCSO conducted an overall use of force training and handcuffing training for its deputies and detention officers? Were the detention officers that handcuffed Neville certified to handcuff him? Have there been any policy changes for how to handle handcuffs when the key breaks, for when bolt cutters are necessary? When did Sheriff Kimbrough and DA O'Neill become aware and view of the contents of the video footage, specifically viewing Mr. Neville being hogtied and calling out, "I can't breathe"?

Why was Guilford County never notified of John Neville's death? What would have happened had Guilford County ADA Spiker known that John Neville was resuscitated after losing his pulse in FCDC custody when she was asked to release his unsecured bond? Would these staff members have still been charged had SB 168 not been vetoed by Governor Cooper? Why were these staff members allowed to continue working with our incarcerated siblings for seven months after their involvement in a murder? Would the public have been notified of this murder had SB 168 not been vetoed by Governor Cooper? Was the passing of SB 168 intended to shield the murder that took place in the FCDC from the public? What involvement did Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough have in the proposal of SB 168 the night before news reports on the death of John Neville were to become publicly available?

Furthermore, according to the Grace, Tisdale, & Clifton website, "Mike and the firm Grace, Tisdale & Clifton are one of the two local firms who represent local law enforcement through the Police Benevolent Association." Michael Grace, the lawyer for the John Neville estate, has been representing the Sheriff's Department since Sheriff Shatzmen's tenure, and presented Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough to the court and to the public at his swearing in ceremony. What rules of

professional conduct under the NC State Bar Rule 1.7 Conflict of Interest are implicated by Michael Grace representing both the estate and the Sheriff's Office?

Why are you, Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough and DA Jim O'Neill, covering up a murder?

**For further information, please see @TriadAbolitionProject and @\_theunitycoalition\_ on Instagram. All press release documents can be found at [www.triadabolitionproject.org](http://www.triadabolitionproject.org).**

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