



Staff Town Hall

Featuring Benjamin Crump, Esq.

31 August 2020 / 2:00PM / Zoom Meeting

Updates

- As we close out our Black Lives Matter series this Summer, we welcome Benjamin Crump, Esp. Attorney Benjamin Crump believes in justice for all, especially those without a voice. He is a nationally recognized Civil Rights attorney whose clients include the family of Trayvon Martin, Ahmad Aubrey, Michael Brown, Brionna Taylor, George Floyd, and now Jacob Blake.
- His book, *Open Season: Legalized Genocide of Colored People*, examines several ways that African Americans are used as target practice, and offers a systematic plan on how we can begin to change this course of action. We are extremely fortunate to have Attorney Crump present today.
- During our final BLM Town Hall today, we will engage in an open, critical, and courageous conversation about racial social injustice and why we must continue to fight.

Q&A

Q: What is it like for you? What are your emotions? Please tell us why we should continue to fight for justice.

A: When I think about what drives me, I really think about when I look at my daughter's eyes and I see the optimism, hope and enthusiasm in her eyes. Despite the obstacles that we have to deal with every day, while most Americans have to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, black Americans have to deal with that in addition to the 1619 epidemic, that being 400+ years of racial injustice. I also think about what I learned in the first year of law school, precedent. It's all about precedence. Now I don't necessarily agree with that because if you hold that true, most black people would still be slaves because that was the precedent in America for so long. But what I do appreciate is when they say by studying precedent, it is a good indicator on what's likely to happen in the future. So, when I think about the precedent of black people, I think about how much our people

were able to overcome, and that tells me that based on the precedent of our forefather and ancestors, that no matter what they throw at us today, we'll be able to overcome it.

Q: How is the family of Jacob Blake?

A: Obviously, this is a tragic event coming in the aftermath of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, Ahmad Aubrey, and a dozen more names that you all dk that have been killed in this pandemic. We watched the video of Jacob Blake strapping in his kids and not making any threats to the police and still being shot down. We can only imagine the psychological trauma this will have on his children for the rest of their lives. It is very difficult for the Blake family right now, he has lost mobility, he lost his colon, his intestines, he has no control of his bowels or his male organs. The doctors have said that it would be a complete miracle if he ever walks again. So, when you think about this excessive brutal use of force, then think about how a young man just a few days later shot two people dead and walked past officers in the same city without being harmed, you see that there are two justice systems in America. That is the objective, we are fighting so that we all get justice.

Q: How do we lift each other up? I know that these are very difficult times socially, economically, and there are so many different parallels that we are facing as a community. Are there any one or two areas that you think can give us a sense of engagement and anxiousness to build among each other across the country?

A: We have to get our communities to be healthier. So, it's not only stopping the criminal justice system for targeting our children, but also community partners who believe and invest in our communities. It could cooperate, educational, environmental justice, and mentoring patterns to help our communities. For example, i was involved in Flint Michigan where the water was poisoned by the government, and this doesn't just happen in flint. At the foundation, it's the economic viability of the community, we have to have businesses willing to come into our community, we shouldn't have to go outside of our communities to get fresh groceries, or go to the bank. It will give pride in our community, jobs, and mentors for our children to look up to. I don't trivialize that our children are being targeted everyday by the school to prison pipeline, and if we don't create another pipeline, that pipeline will claim our children.

Q: Can you explain to Millennials and Gen Z why it's important to go to the ballot, without encouraging them to vote for any specific candidate. Why judges, DA's, local reps, congress people, etc. are important to vote for as well.

A: I am so encouraged by the youth and their activism. I want them to understand most profoundly is the fact that it is about their very survival. The prison industrial population is 18-35 years old. In a lot of southern states 1 out 5 black men will become a convicted

felon. If this trend continues in the next 25 years, it'll be 1 out of 3 black men. When you put this in perspective and imagine those in our families, it makes you consider what DA you'll vote in that will make these decisions on who to send to prison, the mayor who elects the police department, who will be the school superintendent who won't marginalize students of color. The local elections, the margins are so small as to who will be controlled in our local communities. That's the message we have to get through to young people. I'm proud of the young people because we have seen examples of them voting out prosecutors and voting in black women and people for the first time in their cities after tragedies happen in their communities. Prosecutors have so much power, the power to implement programs and make change in their communities.

Q: What do you think is the road less traveled in terms of solutions at this point, in terms of achieving the eradication of anti-black racism in our institutions across our country, particularly in K -12 institutions?

A: I do think *Brown vs Board of education* still is the fundamental guiding principal on equal education. If we are not going to give the economic resources to intercity schools, then that is still a form of segregation. We have overworked teachers, classes that are too large, don't have the technology to keep up with a rapidly advancing world. Another example is still how we don't have high speed internet in our neighborhoods, because under this administration these businesses are required to offer those services in our neighborhoods. This limits access for kids trying to work at home. The playing field is not even. The digital divide and economic gap gets bigger and bigger. We need to take the tax revenue that was established in *Brown v. Board* and make sure that educational opportunities are equal for everyone.

Q: In light of all of this social unrest, our students are still responsible for coming to school and maintaining a hopeful attitude. What message would you provide for our students today?

A: I would tell young people to stay encouraged because they are the bright spot in our future. Like John Lewis, RIP, he was the young troublemaker and evolved to become one of the greatest statesmen the US has ever known. I say to the young people, please keep doing what you're doing, do not give up on making this a better world. Please continue to refuse to remain silent, and never become a well-behaved victim.

Q: In order for us to make real social change and justice, the leadership in our administration has to change. Can you talk about the upcoming presidential election, do you think that white America will be sympathetic to what needs to happen and vote in Biden/Harris to lead the united states of America?

A: I believe they will but it will take a tremendous effort on the Biden/Harris part, it'll be a close election. A lot of white people like what Trump is doing and saying. Biden has to make the case that not only will they make it a more just society, but they will also make it a more economically thriving society. Unfortunately, as much as we love our children and community there are other people who never consider our community, they love our culture but not our community. They have to make the case that the change they will bring makes it better for everyone, because people vote in their own self-interest.

Q: **What are your thoughts on what college aged people can do now? We all know the importance of voting and being in the streets. What else can we do now to bring about real change?**

A: We need to get more people to run for office and take power and leadership.

Q: **We want the government to sit down with us and grant us reparations. When will we ask for our reparations, this is the power that we have and if Dems and Republicans want us to vote, how can we leverage that into our demands?**

A: We should continue to file lawsuits against institutions and government institutions. We have to be innovative and strategic and go after what is rightfully ours. We have to follow the outline of how the Jews were able to recover their assets and artifacts.

Q: **After so many years of free labor that has enabled America to be the country that it is, what more do they want from us? We gave them a 400-year head start and they continue to conspire to systematically deprive us of basic human rights. We need to bring the US before the UN Human Rights council.**

A: This is a capitalistic society, it is all predicated on taking advantage of certain people to the benefit of the capitalist. They will continue to be able to try to dehumanize people just short of slavery, to continue to maximize their profits. That's why the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is so prevalent, multibillion-dollar corporations' profit from people being in prison. They won't stop unless we make them stop.

Q: **Mr. Crump, recent polls (of last week) suggest that support for BLM is decreasing. A CNN poll of last week revealed that support was at 52 percent, down from 64 the previous month. I think that one reason is that violence that sometimes accompanies the protest and the Trump administration of course is trying its best to exploit this by illogically trying to connect all protests with violence. Sir, in your opinion, what will it take, other than an endless string of protests, to get the police to begin treating us like human beings?**

A: It's going to take great lawyers to continue to sue them and make them pay millions of dollars to the point of bankruptcy. Once they see that it is not economically suitable to

continue to take black lives or support the PIC, they will stop. As long as they see it as financially advantageous, they will not stop this behavior. We also have to create our own narratives and our own stories.

Q: Please describe racial inequities in sentencing, client's treatment, and knowledge of the court processes you may have witnessed in your experience as an attorney.

A: I go into more detail about this in my book, but it's quite simple, black men make up about 7% of the population in America but almost 50% of the population that are imprisoned. So that tells us that either black men are naturally extremely violent and evil, or that our justice system is racist and targets black men. The only way that we can get those statistics is if we are being targeted.

Q: How can we get Biden/Harris to address the violence and provide realistic solutions to policing?

A: I think it's evolving already. I really want them to hold police accountable and implement policies that do so. They should be charged with federal crimes for these crimes.

Q: How effective would "Community Policing" be to reduce the involvement of Police Officers in the Urban Black and Brown Community -- if effective, how do we effectively initiate community policing?

A: It would be effective if we vote in the right people to create systemic reform. In Minneapolis, they voted to defund their police because they voted for the right people. It's not a complicated equation.

Q: Speaking of Laquan McDonald, do you know if Ms. Fox pursued any charges other than officer Jason Van Dyke, against other Chicago officers who took part in the cover up?

A: I don't think so and that's just a horrific miscarriage of justice. All of those officers lied and that's what creates mistrust between police and the black community.

Q: Are you aware of any boycotts similar to those that were sponsored by Jessie Jackson? We need to show economic pain.

A: I agree, I'm not aware of any such boycotts.

Q: In regards to defunding the police. As it stands the current bills trying to be passed have failed. In the same place our brother George was taken from us, there was a group trying to place safeguards by insurance regulations of the police force. Mandating Liability insurance could be a great safeguard, as it would cause bad cops

to not be able to afford the insurance for the job and make police stay focused with no cost to the public.

A: I agree.

Q: **What advice do you have for black parents whose children are being taken from them in family court and given to the other parent who is not black? Family law court continues to separate black parents from their own children.**

A: This system is very racist and discriminatory. You have to have a good lawyer that can represent and fight for you. You don't want to go in the courtroom and fight alone.