

Support Group of the City Council's Appeal of the Zared Jones Related Gag Order

Dear Mayor Vaughan and Members of the Greensboro City Council,

The Signers below represent some of the groups that intend to file an Amicus Curiae Brief in support of your appeal to the NC Court of Appeals of the gag order regarding the Zared Jones incident that took place on September 10, 2016. We commend you for challenging the gag order that grossly violates our rights as citizens and your right and duty to speak publicly about questions of police misconduct and accountability. We write now, however, to urge you to act immediately, pursuant to your clearly existing authority to view the entire, lengthy set of police body camera recordings and take appropriate action.

We understand that up until now you have declined to view the recordings until the gag order is overturned and you are allowed to discuss the content of the recordings with the public. Yet, the appeal may take a year or longer to be resolved. Important issues of police conduct and accountability must not be put on a back burner - especially when you have the power and duty to act now.

Moreover, we understand Attorney Graham Holt, who has viewed with court permission the lengthy set of police recordings on behalf of Zared Jones and others involved in the incident, has recently provided you with a non-public document that gives you notice of specific alarming facts contained in those many hours of police recordings. We do not know the details of that non-public document, and Attorney Holt is under the same gag order as you are and thus cannot reveal those details. But the publicly available cell phone recording of part of the Zared Jones incident compels action now - without delay.

We are not prejudging whether the police acted legally or illegally. However, given that you have sought and obtained a court order allowing you to view the police recordings, and given that the need for public confidence in police accountability and equal treatment of all citizens is at an all time high, we urge you not to dodge these critical public interest issues by hiding behind the appeal.

We very much appreciate the effort you have made to fight for your right (and duty) to discuss the contents of the police body camera recordings related to this case with the public. We believe that full transparency in regard to questioned police actions is absolutely essential to gaining and maintaining public trust in our police officers and in the system under which they operate.

However, we feel strongly that the essential next step is for the entire City Council to quickly view the entire set of recordings (not a composite or edited version) made by the police as well as the additional recordings of the disturbance taken on private cell phones. You should also examine the written reports, eyewitness accounts, and any other information available. You will then be in a position to take whatever policy action you deem appropriate in your role overseeing the City Manager who oversees the Police Chief.

Once you have made your determination, we will evaluate our own best next actions in obtaining full transparency with regard to police interactions with the public.

Sincerely,

1.) Beloved Community Center of Greensboro

Contact: Wesley Morris – wesleym@belovedcommunitycenter.org

2.) SOI Community Play! All Stars Alliance

Contact: Tiera Moore, Co-Director - tiera621@gmail.com

3.) The Homeless Union of Greensboro

Contact: Marcus Hyde - gohyde@gmail.com

4.) Democracy Greensboro

Contact: Hester Petty - hester@rootsandreliefs.info

5.) The Professors of Reclaiming Democracy

Contact: Spoma Jovanovic, UNCG - drspomaj@gmail.com

Stephen Bloch-Schulman, Elon University

Hollyce "Sherry" Giles, Guilford College

John "Fred" Humphrey, NC A&T State University

Daniel Malotky, Greensboro College

Casey Thomas, Community Fellow

6.) Triad City Beat

Contact: Publisher/Executive Editor, Brian Clarey - brian@triad-city-beat.com

7.) The Pulpit Forum

Contact: President - Dr. Rev. Daran Mitchell - dlcmitch@aol.com

8.) The Guilford Anti-Racism Alliance (GARA)

Contact: John Moyle - j.a.moyle@gmail.com

9.) UNCG Faculty Members

Contact: Dr. Michael Frierson, UNCG Faculty - dr.michaelfrierson@gmail.com

Dr. Justin Harmon, UNCG Faculty

10.) League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad (LWVPT)

Contact: Anna Fesmire – Vice President - arhfesmire@gmail.com

Vicki White-Lawrence – President - vwhitelawrence@gmail.com

Gary Kenton – Board Member garyskenton@gmail.com

11.) Carolina Peacemaker

Contact: Alfrique Kilimandjaro - editor@carolinapeacemaker.com

12.) St. Barnabas Episcopal Church

Contact: Rev. Randall Keeney – keeney.randall@gmail.com