



P.O. Box 410184      Kansas City, Missouri 64141-0184      www.jacksoncountybar.com

June 4, 2020

Re:      Open Letter to Our Colleagues In The Missouri Legal Community

*2020 Executive Board*

**Shaun Stallworth**  
*President*

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*Vice-President*

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**Anthony McDaniel**  
*Immediate Past President*

Founded at a time when black attorneys were not permitted to join larger metropolitan and national bar associations, the Jackson County Bar Association was founded *to work to ensure justice and equal opportunity for the African-American community; improve the administration of justice; preserve the independence of the judiciary, improve the economic conditions of all citizens of Missouri; uphold the honor of the legal profession; and **protect the civil and political rights of the citizens and residents of the State of Missouri.*** After continually witnessing black men and women lose their lives at the hands of the police, the Jackson County Bar Association is in a word: outraged. Outraged, that Black Americans continue to die at the violent hands of police officers, and those who do not value Black lives. Nationally, these deaths include Ahmaud Arbery, Georgia, who was jogging while black; EMT worker Breonna Taylor, Kentucky, who was killed in her bed; and George Floyd, Minnesota, who was murdered on the streets of Minneapolis. Locally, Ryan Stokes, Terrence Bridges, Donnie Sanders and Cameron Lamb, to name a few, are Kansas Citians whose lives were lost due to police violence. Consequently, many of our communities' struggle to maintain faith and trust that local law enforcement will fully investigate crimes to the fullest extent of the law. We can no longer accept the status quo.

Over the past several days, many have asked us what they can do to get involved. The answer is simple: use your voice! Immediate actions can be taken in our community beginning with restoring trust in the investigations of officer involved homicides and excessive use of force cases by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department (KCPD). The practice of KCPD investigating itself needs to end. Instead, outside law enforcement agencies, such as the State Attorney General's Office, should conduct independent investigations to increase public trust and eliminate bias, prejudice and conflicts of interest. We ask that you contact the mayor's office and your local city councilmember demanding accountability and transparency in officer involved homicides and excessive force cases.

Further, approximately 70% of the City's operating budget is allocated to public safety with over \$250 million dedicated to the police department, yet, the City of KCMO has no authority over KCPD decisions, policies, practices, and procedures. We ask that you contact your state representative demanding local control of the KCPD.

We need your help. As a primarily African-American Bar Association, we remain committed to our purpose. We ask our supporters and colleagues in the legal community to stand with us. We ask that the legal community remember the oath "to practice law . . . with consideration of the defenseless and oppressed" to make Kansas City a better place for all of its citizens. Please click [here](#) for the mayor and your city council member's contact information.