

Open Letter
Honorable Governor Bill Lee
State of Tennessee
August 12, 2019

State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd
Nashville, TN 37243

Greetings:

A Consortium of ministers of Hamilton County have come together to oppose the manner in which the law enforcement officers of this county, under the leadership of Sheriff Jim Hammond, are enforcing the governing laws. When you met with a group of African American pastors, while campaigning for governor, you expressed that your faith in Christ guides you in all of your principle development. It is because of this declaration that we are calling upon you at this critical hour.

On July 22, 2019, approximately 50 in ministers met at the entrance of the sheriff's office to demand his resignation due to the inhumane treatment of those in his custody. The sheriff has declared that he will not resign. We believe Tennessee to be a state that is forward looking and should not tolerate abuse of power and a blatant disregard for State law, as Hammond continues to allow from his officers.

We realize that there are good law enforcement officers, but there are too many who make their own laws and execute justice through usurping the power of the State laws. Further, we do not condone illegal activities of those arrested nor do we condone the illegal activities of the arresting officers. There are a number of cases that were referred to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) by the Attorney General of Hamilton County. We request expeditious processing of these cases. Two of which are most recent—Myron Mitchell and James Toney.

***James Toney—beaten while in handcuffs.*

***Myron Mitchell—stripped of his clothes, and a cavity search performed on the side of the road.*

We invite you to Chattanooga any day during the week of August 24-31, 2019 to sit down and talk with us. It is our hope that together we can bring about changes that will be beneficial to the citizens and the law enforcement officers who are assigned to protect. We agree with your statement made after the recent shootings in Texas and Ohio: "We need to protect citizens, protect liberties and freedoms at the same time so we're working to look at all options out there." We need options that bring about solutions, so that citizens are protected from abuse at the hands of the hired protector. You may contact us at 2019consortium@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Timothy Careathers
Consortium Representative

Attachments: Press Release, Hammond Request to Resign

cc: Senator Todd Gardenhire, 425 5th Avenue North, Suite 732 Cordell Hull Bldg., Nashville, TN 37243
Representative Mike Turner, 425 5th Avenue North Suite 632 Cordell Hull Bldg., Nashville, TN 37243
Representative Yusef Hakeem, 425 5th Avenue North Suite 524 Cordell Hull Bldg. Nashville, TN 37243
Attorney General Neal Pinkston, 600 Market Street, Suite 310, Chattanooga, TN 37402

Hamilton County African American Ministers Call for the Immediate Resignation of Hamilton County, Tennessee Sheriff Jim Hammond AT 10:00 A.M. EDT AT 600 Market Street Chattanooga, TN JULY 22, 2019

July 22, 2019 (For Immediate Release)

Chattanooga, Tennessee — a consortium of Hamilton County Tennessee pastors and ministers call for the immediate resignation of Hamilton County, Tennessee Sheriff Jim Hammond; and the firing of Deputy Sheriffs Daniel Wilkey and Bobby Brewer—after the latest incident of the alleged beating and forceful search through the anus of an African American man on the side of a dark road, while in handcuffs. We are outraged at the egregious acts perpetuated on people of color in Hamilton County under the control of Sheriff Jim Hammond, especially the acts toward African American men, such as Mr. Myron Mitchell encountered last week.

The ministers agree that as representatives of God, they cannot sit idly and watch the injustices that are flagrantly placed on God's people. Micah 6:8 cries to us to step forward and do what is right and just and to model the call of the scriptures in our lives and our ministry.

There are too many instances of law enforcement using policies that crush the rights of the citizens who are to be protected. In addition, we demand the restructuring of the operation of the Sheriff's department and the development of policies that recognize the importance of what is right and just.

Just six months ago, the community watched the video of Mr. Toney as he was beaten while handcuffed; and now we have another video with another black man, Mr. Mitchell, being beaten under Sheriff Jim Hammond's direct control. God calls us to speak to and for our people who trust us to minister to them and their families. On this day we declare ***enough is enough***.

For more information contact 2019consortium@gmail.com Note: The call will be personally delivered to Sheriff Hammond at 10:00 A.M. at 600 Market Street, Chattanooga, TN

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Monday, July 22, 2019 at 600 Market Street

Call for Resignation of Sherriff Jim Hammond

We stand here today, a consortium of pastors and ministers, as representatives of Almighty God. We have the authority of scripture that says ...what does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

Sheriff Hammond, we agree with you said—"the only time I would resign is if I was doing something illegal, unethical or immoral". Questions being: is beating a handcuffed man illegal, unethical or immoral? Is stripping a man's pants from him on the side of the road illegal, unethical or immoral? Is the alleged anal penetration in public, illegal, unethical or immoral? Is lying to cover the criminal activities of your deputy sheriffs, illegal, unethical or immoral?

Sheriff Hammond's your resignation needs to be immediate and swift because you have proven that you endorse the violent and racist conduct of the department and the culture of embedded bias and brutality toward our citizens. There have been historical incidents that affirm this reality and very recent incidents.

Twenty-six years ago, Black motorist—Larry Powell was stopped by two white deputies on a dark road and died as a result of an illegal choke hold. The choke hold was delivered by a P24 baton, according to the coroner, Dr. Frank King said, "The death was a homicide, a death that was not natural". G.A. Bennett said, "...the cause of death was neck compression". G.A. Bennett was the spokesman then and G.A. Bennett is the spokesman now. Jim Hammond was the Sherriff then and Jim Hammond is the Sheriff now.

The Hamilton County Sheriff's most famous quote regarding "gang members" in 2012 is a great example of his heart and policing tactics and strategies. He said, "We need to run them out of town, put them in jail or send them to the funeral home." This reminds me of another ungodly, militaristic, policing tactic found in the Biblical witness in Matthew chapter 2, when the

oppressive empire under Herod commissioned the death of every male from two years old and younger. The statements that you make explain your attitude and lack of action when issues arrive that relate to the people of color in Hamilton County. Listen, Hammond's actions toward people of color and his statements are his core conviction of what protecting and serving is all about.

The department, under this Sheriff, has denied the basic humanity of the black citizens that it should be protecting. The brutal beating of Charles Toney by deputies several months ago has yet to be resolved. And to further illustrate this bias and inhumane treatment of black citizens, is the death of Devonte Allison in December of 2018 after he reportedly experienced a seizure in the custody of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department. No one in the Sheriff's Department has even given the family of Mr. Allison the common or human courtesy of calling to offer condolences.

In December of 2018 it was Mr. Toney who was beaten, while handcuffed. This most recent incident involving Mr. Mitchell only serves to verify the corrupt culture of the Sheriff's Department that is being encouraged in subtle ways by Sheriff Hammond. He refers to his officers as "young, good and seasoned officers." If they are good and seasoned officers, why did the officers not know that according to Rule 41 of the Tennessee Rules of Criminal Procedure; a "body cavity" search is defined as "an inspection, probing or examination of the inside of a person's anus, vagina and genitals" in order, to determine whether an individual is concealing something such as a weapon or controlled substance. The code goes on to say that no person shall be subjected to a body cavity search by a law enforcement officer unless the search is conducted pursuant to a search warrant. Further, a doctor or nurse is to perform a legal search. The alleged act of inspecting Mr. Mitchell on the side of the road is immoral, illegal, and unethical.

There was a community ground swell earlier this year demanding Sheriff Hammond's resignation. His response was, "Absolutely not, not over this. The only time I would resign is if I was doing something illegal, unethical or immoral." We speak boldly to you this day and say "Jim Hammond, your department is terrorizing black bodies, your silence and passive attitude regarding such

deplorable incidents, your consistency in “standing by your men” when they hurt people and damage families in the process, is illegal, unethical and immoral, and an abomination to God.

You were elected by the people to do your job by the laws of the State of Tennessee, but **you** have allowed your deputies to go unchecked as they brutalize men explosively, **you** are consistently accused of failing to give medication to those in your custody, **you** fail to prevent contraband from coming into the jails. **Your** deputies, under **your** watch, have taken the position of judge, jury and executioner by handcuffing and beating black men on the streets of Hamilton County. You have known for years that your department and you have serious problems and inefficiencies. In fact; Tom Morsche, Managing Director of PFM, the firm the county hired, to consult on the future of the jail in 2015 said the Hamilton County jail should be shutdown.

Your time is up as Sheriff of Hamilton County Tennessee. We will not live in fear of who the next black boy or girl will be who suffer the injustices of those **you** control—**NO**, we do not wish to hear it is my neighbor, our church member, our family or our sister or brother. There is just one word to **you** today Sheriff Hammond, **RESIGN**, and before you resign, terminate Deputies, Daniel Wilkey and Bobby Brewer.

Jim Hammond you went on record stating, “I will say this again, human nature is human nature, no doubt, this will happen again. Why should these acts happen again, because **YOU** refuse to step down?”

In Amos 5:24 the scripture reaches out and says: “Let Judgment run down as waters And righteousness as a mighty stream”. (KJV)

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