



## Taylor reaction: From UK, UofL, and Secretary of State to Planned Parenthood

September 24, 2020

Steve Rogers

Actress Kerry Washington tweeted, “Daniel Cameron is on Donald Trump’s short list as replacement of #RBG on the Supreme Court. The same man who decided to not charge the officers responsible for killing #BreonnaTaylor. Vote.”

Hip hop artist, actor and activist Common quoting James Baldwin, tweeted, “To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost all of the time.”

He was also at a rally in Frankfort back in June, where he called for justice for Breonna Taylor, and made a promise to protect Black women.

“I stand up for Black women because it was a Black woman who told me to say her name,” Common said back in June. “Say her name. Breonna Taylor.”

The ACLU of Kentucky also went to Twitter saying, in part, “None of the charges are related to her death. Once again, the state has denied that Black lives matter by failing to hold law enforcement accountable.”

Even the University of Kentucky, where Taylor was a former student, released a statement saying, in part, “How Breonna’s tragic death is addressed as a matter of law is not something I, or anyone on our campus, can control...what we can determine is the sense of moral clarity, intellectual focus and urgent commitment we bring to ensuring it never happens again.”

These are only a few of the hundreds of statements after the indictment announcement Wednesday. Users continue to use hashtags, such as #JusticeForBreonna, #BreonnaTaylor, and what many have been chanting at protests across the country, #SayHerName.

They include:

### **Secretary of State Michael Adams:**

“Attorney General Cameron has shown immense courage in taking on the investigation of the killing of Breonna Taylor; great diligence in painstakingly running down every lead; and extraordinary grace under pressure in detailing his findings before the eyes of our country. A

prosecutor's highest duty is not charges or convictions, but justice, even when it leads to an emotionally unsatisfactory result.

The Attorney General, and the sitting grand jury in Jefferson County, applied the facts to the law. Our next step as a Commonwealth is to improve the law. I applaud the Attorney General's efforts toward improvement of our justice system, and I hope that reform legislation will be enacted in the 2021 legislative session, if not sooner."

**UK President Eli President Capilouto message to campus:**

"History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history." – James Baldwin

Dear Campus Community,

We are our history.

The reckoning we now confront as a country cannot be for one moment or one semester. We must, necessarily, carry it with us always – as both burden and reminder, as collective grief and motivation.

One of those heartbreaking reminders of our ever-present history is our former student, Breonna Taylor. Her death – and the aftermath of it – is a tragedy. Unfortunately, tragedy does not capture the sense of loss and anger, weariness and cynicism so many of us feel right now.

Many of us, I know, are left with the feeling that no matter how much we try, we cannot possibly understand what our neighbors and friends of color are experiencing – each day – even as we now have seen the images repeatedly flashed on screens large and small.

I can try to picture what it means when colleagues tell me they are consumed with fear when their children leave home to run an errand. I can try to grasp the worry friends say they feel when a loved one departs for a simple jog.

However, I cannot really ever understand. Yet, I can listen. I can care. And I can act.

How Breonna's tragic death is addressed as a matter of law is not something I, or anyone on our campus, can control or ordain. What we can control is how we respond as a community. What we can determine is the sense of moral clarity, intellectual focus and urgent commitment we bring to ensuring it never happens again.

We can provide spaces to gather and grieve, to discuss and dream. Our students are doing that, utilizing our MLK Center as a place to reflect, to share and process this moment. It is a small step, but a necessary one. Sharing ideas, after all, is how we always begin.

We have made our counseling center available to students, who we know will have questions and harbor pain during this time. You can go [here for information on services](#), or call 859-257-8701, for more instructions.

And we can also bring to this moment the ability to marshal tremendous intellectual capacity, across an array of disciplines, to understand our history and summon ideas and reforms that might address the systemic, systematic racism that brought us here.

Our own police department has been part of this process already. The department recently used an outside facilitator for anti-racism training to explore how to best confront the biases we all share. Our department also is exploring still other ways to be part of sustainable solutions for the future. Our senior administrative team and academic leadership also took part in anti-racism training this week as a start to what we know must be long efforts to create change within our campus culture.

A number of students, staff and faculty are considering how to carry forward the conversations and ideas for policy reforms and programs. Can we reimagine what a new judicial and legal system, founded on anti-racist ideas, looks like? How might we consider reforms that open wider the doors to capital and support entrepreneurship and business creation? Can access to health care and outcomes of that care be more open and equitable?

Racism is not simply our shared and tortured past. It is our present. Believing otherwise is neither realistic nor honest. And we will carry it with us, even as we work each day to erase its stain and undo its damage.

But our blighted baggage does not have to be our future. What seems inevitable today does not have to persist to tomorrow. As an institution, we were founded on the idea that our past – while imperfect and painfully persisting as our present – can include a brighter and more just future.

We must resist the disheartening temptation to be bound by an unwillingness to imagine. We carry our history with us. We can, though, commit to the idea that history should inform – not limit – our future. In that sense, perhaps, history is giving us a chance to change.

We may not be able to ever truly understand. But we can listen. We can care. And we must act.

Eli Capilouto President

**House and Senate Democratic Leaders Joni Jenkins and Morgan McGarvey:**

“For months now, the too-short life and legacy of Breonna Taylor have shown us how much work remains to have justice that is swift and laws that help more than harm. As we absorb the full impact of today’s decision, we understand the shock, anger, and sorrow many feel. We believe as legislators the best way to honor Breonna and other victims is to propose and pass meaningful policies that address systemic racism and keep all of Kentucky’s communities safe. The fight for justice does not and cannot stop here.”

**Michael Aldridge, executive director of the ACLU of Kentucky:**

“Today’s announcement is the latest miscarriage of justice in our nation’s long history of denying that Black lives matter. Once again, a prosecutor has refused to hold law enforcement accountable for killing a young Black woman. Breonna Taylor should still be alive today. We

join the Taylor family and the community in protesting and mourning the Commonwealth's choice to deny justice for Breonna.

“Breonna Taylor was killed when plainclothes officers used a no-knock warrant to enter her home in the middle of the night. They did not even perform life-saving measures as she took her last breaths after they shot her five times. Throughout this tragic series of events, including today, the police and prosecutors continuously have failed Breonna Taylor, her family, and Black Kentuckians.

“This outcome shows us that true police accountability does not exist in Kentucky. Police accountability will not exist until every level of government works to prevent police violence and hold law enforcement responsible every single time they abuse their power, not just in high profile cases.

“The results of this investigation reflect insufficient standards for police use of force, government-sanctioned violence and terror in communities of color, and a need to completely rebuild our justice system.

“The ACLU of Kentucky will continue working with community leaders, activists, and elected officials to radically change policing so this never happens again.”

**The Republican Party of Kentucky spokesman Mike Lonergan:**

“The death of Breonna Taylor was a tragedy and we understand the grief and pain felt by many in Louisville and across our state and country – especially her loved ones, whom we will continue to keep in our prayers.

“With today's announcement, Kentuckians see Attorney General Cameron's commitment to justice and the rule of law at work. We applaud him and his team for working tirelessly to conduct this investigation with integrity and impartiality, following the facts to the truth – regardless of outside influence and external political pressures.”

**STATEMENT BY LORALEI HOJAY, STARTER OF VIRAL BREONNA TAYLOR PETITION:**

“I'm saddened to see the lack of justice for Breonna Taylor in this grand jury announcement. Justice has not been served,” said Lorelei HoJay, the student petition starter behind the [viral Change.org petition calling for Justice for Breonna](#) with over 11.2 million signatures. “We now need to channel this disappointment into legislation that bans no-knock warrants everywhere around the country.”

**Statement from Tamarra Wieder, Kentucky State Director for PPAIK:**

“This is one more example of state-sanctioned violence against Black people and an assault against their ability to live freely. This is a painful loss for the family of Breonna Taylor, and for Louisville and the state of Kentucky. This country is grappling with a racial reckoning — around police violence, the disproportionate impact on COVID-19, and racist and discriminatory systems that impact access to health care. The delta between justice and freedom is vast.

“The police officers who killed a sleeping woman were found innocent and will not face criminal charges, and the remaining officer was charged with ‘wanton endangerment.’ Attorney General Cameron’s decision is not the justice Breonna Taylor deserves. Cameron continues to claim the “truth” is before us. The truth is, he has failed Breonna, her grieving family, and our entire community. This is why thousands across the country are marching in the street demanding justice and accountability.

“Racism permeates every structure in our society. If Black people do not have the right to bodily autonomy to live their daily lives — or protest the violence against their lives — without the fear of violence or murder, we can never achieve justice, let alone reproductive freedom.

**The Council on American-Islamic Relations Kentucky Chair Waheedah Muhammad.**

“We reject this unjust decision by the grand jury and urge federal authorities to intervene in the case. This is not justice. Innocent people were not merely endangered during this police shooting. An innocent person was murdered. If Kentucky will not hold all the responsible officers accountable for the death of Breonna Taylor, the Justice Department must do so.”

**Cato Institute vice president for criminal justice, Clark Neily,**

“Today’s decision by a grand jury to indict only one of the officers responsible for Breonna Taylor’s death—and then only for blindly spraying shots into neighboring apartments during the botched raid—will further underscore widespread perception that there is rarely any justice for victims of police misconduct. And even if the grand jury’s decision to give two of the officers responsible for Taylor’s death a free pass might arguably be defensible as a purely legal matter, the fact that they were at her door with a no-knock warrant in hand illustrates how fundamentally reckless the system has become. Unfortunately, it appears the only justice we can hope for in this case is a recognition that the time has finally come to end America’s cruel, immoral, and pointless war on drugs.”

**Moms Demand Action Founder Shannon Watts and Kentucky chapter volunteer Henrietta Dean:**

“No charge could bring Breonna Taylor back, but justice and progress require full accountability for those responsible for her death. Today, no one was held accountable for killing Breonna Taylor. Today’s indictment reflects the longstanding barriers to reducing police violence in America, and it’s more proof that the current systems are set up to fail Black communities.”

“Breonna Taylor should be alive today. We stand with the community and will support them as they continue this fight. Until we can ensure that what happened to Breonna will never happen again, we have to keep fighting to protect Black lives from gun violence.”

**Former police officer and Democratic candidate for Congress in KY-06 Josh Hicks:**

“While I cannot speak for Breonna Taylor, her family, or her community, I believe that justice for Breonna Taylor must include changing the policies that led to the obtaining and execution of this warrant in the first place, and ensuring that this tragedy never happens again. The indictment of Officer Hankison is only a small step towards justice. The solution has to be accountability

and reform, at all levels, local, state, and federal. The policies and systemic racism that led to the issuance of the warrant, and the officers being there in the first place, must change. Criminal statutes only go so far. We need real reform.”

**UK Academic Leadership sent the following email to campus:**

Dear Members of the UK Community:

Our thoughts are with the family, friends and community members directly affected by the news released today about Breonna Taylor’s death. We know that coping in such a public way adds layers to an already deep grief.

Like many of you, we experienced a range of emotions upon hearing this news. For some, it was frustration. For others, it was fear. Collectively, we share a sense of concern, urgency and responsibility.

We, as academic administrators, recognize the impact this development has on our university community, particularly students. We acknowledge the hurt and anger many are feeling. We acknowledge the sense of physical and emotional exhaustion many are experiencing. We also acknowledge the need to express these feelings in a meaningful way.

This is a difficult time, too, for many faculty and staff, who are processing their own emotions while simultaneously striving to support students. Mere words cannot capture our gratitude for the contributions of faculty and staff, now and always. They truly make a difference.

We want to state clearly our steadfast commitment to, and support of, faculty, staff, students and community members during this time. As academic administrators, we have no greater responsibility than to foster supportive environments for our learning community. These environments must be diverse and equitable.

For many, this decision is not only a representation of a racist history, but a reminder of the racism that persists. Within that context, we know that platitudes of support are not sufficient. However, acknowledging the import of this latest development and our shared emotional response is integral for being in community, together.

Make no mistake, as university leaders, we are devoted to being an anti-racist community. This is not a questionable concept, and there are no “sides” to this argument. There is not a neutral position or room for intellectual debate. There are only two choices: anti-racism or racism. We are clear as to where we stand.

None of us knows what is to come as the result of the senseless killing of Breonna Taylor. We look forward to engaging with you to ensure that justice and equity are not just superficially represented, but inherently embodied, pragmatically instituted and consistently ensured.”

**Brigitte Blom Ramsey, President & CEO of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence**

“The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is committed to speaking for justice and community, beginning with recognition that our commonwealth has failed to build structures where Black citizens can fully flourish.

“It is vividly clear to us today that Kentucky law enforcement practice and our rules for the safety of humans in their homes and our streets must change. The work of anti-racism – of creating a society that works for all of us — must permeate all institutions and our lives together.

“The Prichard Committee’s work is in education, and we therefore commit to intensive, sustained, collaborative work in that field. We will say more on that in a few hours. For now, we offer our solidarity to all who are angry, grieving, and frightened by Ms. Taylor’s death, and our determination to contribute to a Kentucky that respects, empowers, and protects Black lives.”

**University of Louisville President Neeli Bendapudi:**

“Moments ago, a Louisville grand jury indicted one of the three officers involved in the killing of Breonna Taylor on March 13th, but not on charges related to her killing. While I am pleased that the grand jury has acknowledged the unlawful actions of this police officer and that he will be tried for the unnecessary violence he caused that night, I am disappointed that our justice system allows these atrocities to occur all too often with relatively little consequence.

“Today’s announcement of charges does not change the fact that Breonna Taylor was killed in her home, another Black woman who lost her life at the hands of law enforcement. It does not fix a system that allowed that to happen. A new study by Harvard researchers finds that Black people are three times more likely on average than white people to be killed during a police interaction.

“If you need help processing this news, please reach out to one of the many resources available to you as a member of our UofL community. The Counseling Center will offer virtual and personal counseling sessions for students. The Employee Assistance Program will provide counseling services for faculty and staff.

“Today’s announcement is a reminder that we must recommit to pursuing racial justice and pushing for changes in law enforcement, our legal system, public policy and our educational curricula.

“Change will not come easy. We acknowledge that the path of progress has seldom run smoothly and we are more determined than ever to seek racial equity and justice.

“As the late civil rights icon and U.S. Congressman John Lewis said:

*‘Ours is not the struggle of one day, one week, or one year. Ours is not the struggle of one judicial appointment or presidential term. Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part.’*

“As I said in an earlier email, let us do our best to demonstrate to one another during this historic and difficult time that we are truly a community of care that values diversity and inclusion and respects our people, irrespective of their positions. I commit again to you today that I will do my

part in the ongoing fight to ensure social justice, equal opportunity for all and the elimination of all forms of racism. I hope you will join me.”