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September 11, 2021

To: THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS.

My name is Reverend Marvin Hunter, Senior Pastor of the Grace Memorial Baptist Church in Chicago Illinois. I'm also the great uncle of Laquan McDonald, a young man who at the age of 17 years old was slain by ex-Chicago Police Officer, Jason Van Dyke.

I am writing this letter in support of Rahm Emanuel, former Mayor of the City of Chicago and current Nominee of President Joe Biden as Ambassador to Japan.

From my pulpit in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago I preach the teachings of the prophets. My parishioners and I hearken back to the words of Amos, who called for "justice to roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." Justice is what I have sought for the murder of my nephew, Laquan McDonald, and a measure of justice is being served as the former Chicago police officer convicted of Laquan's murder sits in prison for his heinous crime.

In addition to justice, my faith is based on redemption and forgiveness and I have always believed in the power of turning misery into meaning. That is why, through an intermediary, I reached out to the former Mayor. I wanted to share with him the depths of the wounds of my family's pain and trauma and discuss police reform and the racial reckoning we are witnessing in America. His response was immediate, open and genuinely engaging. During our many conversations, we listened to each other, we prayed together and I believe we begin the process of healing. There is more to this individual than the caricature that is presented in the public. I felt what is in his heart and I know him to be a decent and honorable man who is willing to listen, eager to learn and show a deep level of compassion.

As Mayor, Rahm Emanuel inherited a deeply flawed system and set of policies as it relates to police misconduct investigations. That system over the decades had become twisted in a way that kept an incidence buried. For decades, this was the case in Chicago and cities all across the country and in many ways exists today, certainly his administration could have acted more quickly to address these issues and rebuild trust in our communities. He has acknowledged as much and more in public as well as in our private conversations.

I stand in solidarity with those in the reform movement who carry the torch for Laquan's memory, and the blessed memories of George Floyd, Ahmad Aubrey, Brianna Taylor, and countless other black lives that have been taken too soon by those who were sworn to serve and protect them. However, I draw the line when it is clear that certain elected officials are using the sacred memory of my nephew to settle political scores or use his name as a weapon to fight intra-party battles. Most of the "outrage" and the perpetuation of conspiracy theories comes from elected officials who have never contacted my family to offer even the simplest condolences or learn about the events surrounding this tragic incident.

I realize that my position on this nomination might come as a surprise to some. I may even be attacked for speaking up. However, I am a man of faith. I believe in what the scripture says about righteous judgment and looking into a person's heart. I have taken the time to get to know Rahm Emanuel. We have listened to each other, truly heard each other. I understand the character of the man and that is why I support this nomination.
I thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Rev. M. G. Hunter.


Great Uncle of Laquan McDonald.

