

Peace,

It is with a heavy heart that I write — simultaneously sad, enraged, speechless, and numb after learning that another young Black man, this time Daunte Wright (age 20), was killed by law enforcement in the Twin Cities metropolitan area (Brooklyn Center to be exact). I take this moment to mourn this heart-wrenching loss. Once again, I am left to conclude that agents of the state seek opportunities to use lethal force during encounters with Black people. The system operates as if it is committed to denying what the law promises.

The family and friends of Daunte Wright will never be the same as they have lost the opportunity to experience Daunte's thoughtful words, warm smile and hugs, and generous affection. Our colleagues (whether they be faculty or staff living in the Twin Cities) and our students (in the metropolitan area, on our campus, or around the world) are hurting tonight, wondering when the long nightmare of the struggle for Black dignity will end. Some mourn while trying to continue to meet the demands of work, school, and family. Some mourn in silence and in isolation. Some mourn as they avoid eye contact while trying to hold it together. Some mourn while crying uncontrollably. Some more unable to find the words.

The pain is all too real, too common, too spontaneous, too infectious.

I wish I could look my students in the eye through teary eyes and guarantee that it will be okay. I wish I could show them how we overcame this sixty years ago. I wish I could tell them that if they pour the right libation, their healing will come quickly, the ancestors will guarantee that justice will be served as freedom will ring.

This is an impossible moment. And once again we will rise to the occasion. We will meet the demands of conscience. We will find ways to stop. We will find ways to listen. We will find ways to honor this life and so many others. We will find a way to honor one another. There are pillars of support all around. I seek to be one of many pillars.

The Africana Studies Program stands with all who seek to honor the life and legacies of people of African descent. Africana Studies provides a wealth of resources for not only understanding this moment but guiding through this moment. I encourage our faculty to dig deep; for some that means personal care, for others that means caring for others. I encourage our students to reach out in the way you deem appropriate for your needs and desires. We are here to support.

Take great care of your hearts and minds. They are precious. You are precious.

In peace, love, and power, I greet you in a way that is consistent with my purpose and invite you to be free to honor your own.

I show up as the fullness of who I am:

You know me as Thabiti Willis.

Around the African Diaspora I am known by many names:

Ndugu (brother)

Thabiti (a true man)

Nzuriwatu (of the tightest circle that shall ever be known here or beyond)

Omobowale (our child has returned home)

Ifabowale (Ifa has returned home)

Osho (Seeing eye of the wizard)

John Cardon

PS - This is not an intellectual enterprise. This is the air that I breathe the purpose for which I am here.