

# Topeka JUMP calls for change at Monday night rally

India Yarborough

iyarborough@cjonline.com

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A woman leads members of Topeka JUMP in song at the beginning of a rally Monday in front of the Brown v. Board of Education mural. "Demanding justice, we shall not be moved," they sang. *Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal 2020 File Photo*

Members of the Topeka Justice Unity & Ministry Project gathered in front of the Brown v. Board of Education mural Monday night with a message for the city: Topeka needs your help in the fight for justice.

"We want to make Topeka and Shawnee County a better place to live, work and do business, where everyone has a chance to thrive and where everyone has equal footing," said Eve Kendall, a member of the Topeka JUMP board and Central Congregational Church of Christ.

Kendall, the Rev. Terry Canady of Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, and Deacon Anne Flynn of Grace Episcopal Cathedral all spoke at Monday's rally, which drew more than two dozen people.

They shared their dismay at injustices seen across the country in recent weeks and talked about Topeka JUMP's efforts to push the community forward.

"In the last three months, image after image has made the disparities related to race and poverty in this country more visible — first the coronavirus and then murder after murder of black people at the hands of bad law enforcement," Kendall said. "We are here submitting a call to action to our local community. ... Topeka is not exempt from the systemic oppression that exploits people of color and people living in poverty."

Kendall said Topeka JUMP wants to see city leaders use the city's budget this year to invest in an affordable housing trust fund that would help incentivize construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing.

They also called on Topeka and Shawnee County's Joint Economic Development Organization to make permanent the SOTO Ride-to-Work program, which provides discounted rides to Topekans who might not otherwise be able to access higher-paying jobs at warehouses and plants in south Topeka.

Other issues for which Topeka JUMP is fighting include a local violence reduction program and payday loan reform.

All of those issues play into the organization's mission of advocating for marginalized groups in the capital city and working to uproot systemic racism through racial and economic justice.

"As a black man in America, I'm deeply saddened by the things we have seen," Canady said. "It bothers me because I have young sons. I have grandkids. I have great-grandkids. And I'm concerned about what their tomorrow is going to look like.

"I'm hoping that through the work of justice and others that we're able to make a change. At my age, I don't worry about me, but I worry about those that follow me."

The rally began with a song and ended with a prayer delivered by Flynn.

"Black lives matter," she said. "We call to you, oh God, because your spirit was choked out of a man who cried, 'I can't breathe.' We raise our hands to you, knowing that the work is ours to do. Black, white, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, atheist, young and old, gay and straight — we are all responsible. We are all responsible for what happens next."



Eve Kendall, of Central Congregational Church of Christ, speaks to a group of Topeka JUMP members Monday evening in front of the Brown v. Board of Education mural. She and others shared their dismay at injustices seen across the country in recent weeks and talked about Topeka JUMP's efforts to push the community forward. *Evert Nelson/The Capital-Journal*