

Universal Zulu Nation open letter to survivors, members, and our communities

On behalf of the members of the Universal Zulu Nation worldwide, who have made their voices heard through their chapter leaders, we extend our deepest and most sincere apologies to the many people who have been hurt by the actions of Afrika Bambaataa and the subsequent poor response of our organization to allegations leveled against him. To the survivors of apparent sexual molestation by Bambaataa, both those who have come forward and others who have not, we are sorry for what you endured and extend our thanks to those who have spoken out for your bravery in bringing to light that which most of us were sadly unaware of, and others chose not to disclose. We extend further apologies to Ronald “Bee-Stinger” Savage and Hassan “Poppy” Campbell, who were subjected to unjust and inexcusable attacks on their characters in official statements by our organization when they chose to speak their truths -- we hear you, we believe you, and we stand with you. In addition, we acknowledge the negative impact of our organization’s response on survivors of sexual exploitation and assault everywhere, especially within the communities that we call home; we are to be part of the solution, not the problem, and previous statements and actions from former leaders failed to live up to this promise. Lastly, we apologize to the members of the Universal Zulu Nation in New York City, around the United States, and all around the world for your having been silenced, poorly informed, very poorly represented, retraumatized or triggered by previous official responses, and unfairly implicated in matters that you had nothing to do with when so many of you were living by our Principles; this apology is extended also to former members who felt compelled to leave our organization on account of these failures.

We wish now to make the consensus of the Universal Zulu Nation clear -- our members worldwide speak through us in declaring that we unequivocally oppose child molestation and sexual exploitation and/or violence of any sort. In addition, we oppose concealing knowledge of assaults and protecting of violators, no matter who they are or what their statures may be. Furthermore, we oppose the use of character assassination, intimidation, or other coercive attempts to silence or manipulate accusers and others who would speak in their favor.

We are aware that declarations alone will not atone for the failures of our organization. We commit to the survivors, our members, and our communities the following:

1. We commit to pursuing justice and healing for survivors of alleged sexual molestation committed by Afrika Bambaataa.
2. We commit to educating our members and our communities about child molestation in specific -- and sexual violence in general -- using vetted research and scientific evidence as our guide. We also aim to lean on insight and, when possible, partnerships with professionals who can inform us of best approaches to assuring child safety in any UZN-reserved space or when in the care of UZN, important signs of abuse to be aware of, and best practices for response in suspected cases.
3. We commit to promoting an organizational culture conducive to safely speaking out on these issues or any other matters that our members see as needing to be openly addressed. In keeping with this, we pledge that spokespersons must speak for the group, not for themselves, and must channel the sentiments of our overall membership rather than just those of select leaders. We must, going forward, be an organization of Cause and Laws, not of deference to charismatic

leadership or coercion, if we are to serve our members and communities well, and we will meet that expectation.

As we move forward in addressing the serious issue of child molestation, we recognize this problem to be bigger than our organization and deserving of the attention of our societies at large, and we call on our communities to actively join in this cause. We call for prioritizing expert-informed education on sexuality, sexual orientation, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence. Additionally, we call on communities to learn about and address rape culture proactively; we realize that we were guilty of acquiescing to cultural norms that implicitly endanger children and adult members of society everyday and ask our communities to share in our commitment to shifting this paradigm in a more favorable direction. Lastly, while many families prefer to avoid this topic due to the inherently disturbing nature of it, we call for families to educate children in appropriate ways about sexual molestation, to encourage open lines of communication with children whether they be as young as toddlers or as old as advanced teenagers, and for family and community members to both welcome disclosure of wrongdoing and then prioritize victims, not their abusers, in response.

In closing, we say to survivors and to our communities that we are not speaking out merely to offer redeeming rhetoric, but rather to set the bar by which our subsequent efforts must be judged. We acknowledge that we are still in a transition phase within our organization and dealing with restructuring matters that we will address outside of the public eye, but this reality will not stop our work. We hope that our voices and actions will help to heal and uplift those inside of our organization and in the broader communities who have been hurt by the mismanagement of this situation and pledge that we will manifest our foundational cause of converting negativity into positive outcomes.

Peace,

United undersigned leaders of the Universal Zulu Nation

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