



(24 Organizations in MA, CT, NY, NJ, MD, DC, VA, NC, OH, IL, WI)

Metro IAF Statement on Police Killing of George Floyd

The last minutes of George Floyd's life evoke the 22nd Psalm:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
And are so far from my cry
And from the words of my distress?*

*O my God, I cry in the daytime but you do not answer;
By night as well, but I find no rest.*

So, too, do our thoughts go to our own memories of Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, and Freddie Gray--sons of our cities: New York, Cleveland, and Baltimore--black men murdered by police brutally, callously. Our anger and rage rise again.

The white officers' knee on George Floyd's neck for nine minutes while he pleads for his mother evokes 400 years of kidnappings, lynchings, rapes, family separations, slavery and forced labor, share cropping, equity stripping, unjust imprisonment, medical experiments, job discrimination that denies the humanity and full citizenship of black Americans.

As we watch protesters in Minneapolis and other cities across the country, we know their lamentations must be shouted, must be heard, must not be silenced. For it is only in giving voice to the pain and suffering of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and the thousands of other black people killed in our cities and millions scarred by racism that we might ever begin to imagine a new future.

The shouts must be louder, broader and much longer before this can come to pass though. And we must listen; we must take account. We must relate to the many people who are suffering. In so doing, we must ask: How is God speaking in the streets? What new message, what good news do we hear?

We hear the anger at a criminal justice system that is racist, unfair and out of control especially in relationship to the African American community. It's Floyd today but who tomorrow? It was Christian Cooper one week, who will it be next week? We hear young people fed up with what they see as the inaction of the generations just ahead of them. We

hear young people gripped by despair, filled with anger and not seeing any way to take that pain public except by going to the streets.

What we hear is political leaders, law enforcement leaders, religious leaders, and corporate leaders have failed on so many levels to stop police officers from killing black people. Police killings of black people, police intimidation of black people while driving, when shopping, while living must end, now. The next generation in the streets is demanding systemic change in police accountability and policing.

As our cities are in turmoil, we pray for peace. We want to channel ours' and others' rage and anger to make these and other changes, to create new realities. In a moment that appears hopeless and despairing to many, we renew our call to organize for justice---as we did in Cleveland to win a US Department of Justice consent decree to reform the Cleveland police in the aftermath of the Tamir Rice murder, and as we are doing in Baltimore to win living wage jobs for 850 returning citizens at John Hopkins Health System and other anchor institution employers, and as we have done to win statewide criminal justice reform in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Virginia. The job is not done. We are dedicated to building more power to purge injustice from the system from the ground-up no matter how long it takes.

In this dark hour, we are propelled to this call to which we invite all to join us.

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