



June 3, 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

Graylin Presbury and I as presidents of the Civic and Citizens Federations, respectively, have decided to issue a joint statement on the death of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis and the turmoil now happening in our city and across our nation as so many rise up in protest, and the further inhumane treatment of African Americans even as we protest police brutality. Together we have read so many statements from so many sources expressing the outrage most of us are feeling. The outrage and grief we are experiencing is dreadfully all too familiar. But we don't want to dwell on that outrage. Our thoughts and prayers are with George Floyd's family and so many others. We implore our members and the communities they serve, to educate and challenge yourselves to listen, learn, understand, and support the fight against racism and the fight for greater equity and inclusion in our American society.

It is no longer enough to not be racist. That passivity is no longer acceptable. We need you to become "anti-racists". We need you need to call out racism, prejudice, and discrimination wherever and whenever you see it or hear it. When you hear it from your friends, call it out. When you hear it from your family, call it out. When you hear it at work, call it out. When you see it on the street, call it out. When enough of us actually start confronting this evil everywhere we see it then we can begin to effect the change we want to see.

We commend the peaceful protesters. And while we cannot condone the violence, we understand the frustration as we revisit another black person's death at the hands of the police. Perhaps the violence demands the attention that it deserves as calls of "Do You Hear US Now?" go out. For too long it seems that no one has been listening.

However, when the violence becomes the focus, it distracts from the message that we as a nation must to come together and create real police reform, real criminal justice reform, and an end to the systemic racism that lies at the core of this nation. As Americans we have that responsibility, it is imperative that we actively participate in the perfection of our democracy. We implore our member associations and the communities they serve to do as much as you can to work against racism and towards empathy and fairness.

Take the opportunity to learn as much as you can about institutional racism and privilege. Examine your own hearts. We are each responsible for raising the next generation of children, families and communities that are free from stereotypical biases. You can work to expose police brutality or support a justice advocacy organization. You can work to end the deadly unfairness of our society with its structural inequities as amplified by the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus pandemic on African Americans. Coupled with the economic collapse from the Stay-At-Home guidance meant to stop the pandemic spread, it has further marginalized the least privileged. This is an unprecedented time in our history but our diversity, our varied backgrounds and experiences can be our greatest source of strength, bringing new ideas and fresh perspectives.

Sincerely,

Earl Williams
President
Federation of Citizens Associations of
the District of Columbia

Graylin W. Presbury
President
DC Federation of Civic Associations