

The Official Statement of MESSAGE on Police Brutality and Racial Injustice

In solidarity with the outcries of justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the countless others who have died at the hands of police brutality, *Message* denounces racial violence and calls for the prosecution of all the officers and persons involved.

Reflecting on the recent murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 by Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin, and the global outcry for racial justice, *Message* shares in the outrage that Floyd's death followed an officer's senseless restraint over an alleged counterfeit \$20 bill. We condemn the violent take down of another unarmed black man, father, son, and friend. And we condemn the violence that caused a most humiliating and inhumane death.

We condemn the police line of protection around this act as repugnant to everything we stand for as an organization and as a nation. Rather than serve and protect George Floyd, the police chose to stand in solidarity with their comrade Derek Chauvin. In spite of eight and a half minutes of pleading on deaf ears, pleas of a grown man for his mother, pleas for his life, not one officer intervened. This passivity counters the deadly belief of the "one bad apple," making Chauvin's choice their choice, and created a real time illustration of how institutional racism continues to spawn.

Here at *Message* we also condemn the pause in determining whether to prosecute. The pause evidenced a sense of ambivalence toward justice for George Floyd in contravention of his birthright as an American. It was this pause that stirred the feeling of hopelessness and angst in the hearts of people of color everywhere, and contributed to the unrest and protests across the globe.

While we are pleased to hear of the recent arrests of the remaining officers we believe it necessary to continue to apply pressure to ensure all four officers are indicted and convicted. It is precisely the inability of the court system to discern right from wrong and execute justice that enables the contagion of such brutality. As advocates for criminal justice reform, *Message* believes it critical that justice be found for George Floyd.

As truth tellers, we commend the capture of this incident and the screaming protests waged while it unfolded. Without you many would never have acknowledged the depths of the ugliness of America's systemic racism. This infection of racism has festered so deeply into the bone that without direct action and change we are in danger of losing the life of our country. We encourage you, pray for you, and join you in your protests to ensure that even when against the highest wall of opposition truth can and will be captured and disseminated.

Our condemnation extends to the militaristic response to peaceful protests and protestors. People are more important than property, yet, leadership mobilizes the military to protect windows, while it sets off tear gas on protestors. We further decry the characterization as "violent" as it applies to passionate protestors. Violence is a word that applies to the injury of the body of George Floyd. Violence applies to the suffocation Derek Chauvin employed while restraining Floyd. It is not violent to protest, and is a constitutional right. So we decry the expenditures and deployments now to

protect property. They could easily have been realigned previously to support *people* in need. We join the calls for redirecting police department funds—where they are especially rich in heavy equipment and tactical gear—into schools and communities.

Finally, we lament that this is one more injury to the spirit, one more layer of anguish African Americans, have to navigate. While we bury our dead in greater numbers in the midst of a pandemic, and while so many jobless struggle to find the means to support their families, we find ourselves now having to deal with more state sanctioned violence. We mourn because of the vicarious pain caused here by the police. We cling to our loved ones, afraid for them to live because they could die. We are afraid to sink into a never ending loop of grief, hopelessness and powerlessness. But while we mourn we will still mobilize; while we hope we will still help; and while we sob we will still stand for justice and righteousness.

As a publication we are committed to, in the midst of such great tragedy, bringing you truth, hope, and inspiration as we all continue to war against injustice in all its various forms.

It is our greatest hope and privilege to call on the strong arm of the Lord to assist us and you in this fight. Be encouraged that we serve a God who sits high, and looks low. He will not overlook the sins of the guilty, but in His righteous judgment bring all to justice.