

We are united in solidarity with Minneapolis, Louisville and all the cities reeling from murders of unarmed Black people by police.

We will not rest until there is an end to racist policing.

We will not rest until there is real justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and all who came before them and, unfortunately, will likely come after them.

In Response to the Murder of George Floyd

Jun 02, 2020

By: Abdi Soltani [@AbdiSoltani](#) and Candice Francis [@ACLU_NorCal](#)

The killing of George Floyd on May 25 has returned the spotlight on racist policing and the dehumanization of African Americans in the criminal legal system. As America witnessed the unfiltered murder of Mr. Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, no one could argue that his blackness wasn't the catalyst that led to his demise. His premature death reads like an installment in a sick serial novel with intervals so short between chapters that one black life taken is followed by another and another in rapid succession. Say their names: George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Oscar Grant, Stephon Clark, Mario Woods, Jessica Williams, Steven Taylor, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Amadou Diallo, and on and on and on.

This is the backdrop that frames the ACLU of Northern California's response to the death of Mr. Floyd, which includes the devastating effect of the Coronavirus and its disparate impact on the black community. We share the grief and anger that's spilling into the streets, calling for justice. We're learning from our black colleagues how systemic racism forces them to contain their sorrow and rage even when there isn't a vessel large enough to hold it.

A Three-Step Process

We face myriad challenges. Immediately, we need an end to the slew of hastily announced "curfews" enacted in cities and counties across California that lack clarity as to their scope and duration. These disruptions are far broader than necessary and threaten free speech and the right to assemble, as well as prevent people from attending to their ordinary needs during this extraordinary time. Blanket closure of all public spaces gives police unfettered discretion, which has been shown to lead to selective and biased enforcement, and a high potential for the exact type of racialized abuses that are being protested. We must prevent the government – locally and nationally – from seizing upon the public health crisis and this time of protest against police violence to enact broad and limitless measures that strip us of our fundamental rights.

Secondly, we must advance urgently needed reforms of our local police departments. The repetition of unjustifiable homicides and shootings must cease, replaced by broad changes to law enforcement policies, practices,

and cultures. Over the past decade, with the extraordinary leadership of people impacted by police violence, California has passed meaningful legislation to gain access to racial profiling data, open misconduct records, and impose limits on police use of deadly force. Each of these laws must be faithfully and immediately implemented, which requires pressure from the public and activists and leadership from elected officials. This year our focus is on continuing to hold police accountable, limiting the potential for abuse, and shifting resources away from police and towards community-based initiatives that support true safety, health, and well-being. To that end, we are a signatory to a letter by [Movement for Black Lives](#) (M4BL) calling for defunding of police and reinvestment in communities.

Third, we call on our ACLU members and supporters to proactively fight racism and to support and lift-up black-led organizations with pro-black agendas. We must focus on the issues that bring us here today – the stark racial divide that persists and the current manifestation of white supremacy. Guided by our shared humanity, we must support black leadership in the quest for justice and power without expecting black people to “cure” or “fix” the racism imposed upon them. To our members, donors, and the many foundations in our region, we urge you to donate to community led organizations mobilizing to stem the impact of police violence. Please donate monthly or annually to sustain these organizations.* Just a few of those groups are listed below.

The Path Forward

At this moment, when government forces threaten those who dare to resist, including the press that reports this resistance, we must continue to speak up unambiguously for racial justice **and the right to protest**. In honor of George Floyd and all black and brown people who have unjustly lost their lives to police violence, we must reaffirm our unequivocal stance against police brutality.

We're living in an unprecedented time requiring us to make stark choices like the moments expressed in the poem "**First they came...**". How many more George Floyds can we watch die before us? How long can we tolerate a system that recycles fallacies about the value and worth of one human being compared to another? How long can we tolerate curfews and responses to pandemics that underscore the disparities that exist among us?

The answer is obvious, but the road to get there is unpaved. History is replete with examples of barriers so imposing, it wasn't clear if they could be challenged, but somehow they were. It is now up to us to join forces and secure the monumental changes that are needed so that the George Floyd's of the world can live out their natural lives in peace and with justice.

***Community-led Groups:**

Anti Police-Terror Project: <http://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/>

Justice Teams Network: <https://justiceteams.org/new-page>

Black Organizing Project: <http://blackorganizingproject.org>

Youth Justice Coalition in LA: <https://youthjusticela.org/donate2yjc/>

Young Women's Freedom Center: <https://www.youngwomenfree.org/donate/>

Transgender Gender-Variant & Intersex Justice Project: <http://www.tgijp.org/donate.html>

Families United for Justice: <http://fu4jgroup.website/index.html>

Law Enforcement Accountability Network: <https://www.lean4change.org/>

Abdi Soltani, Executive Director, and Candice Francis, Communications Director, at ACLU of Northern California