



The Men of Essex

Established in 1958

MEN OF ESSEX STATEMENT RECENT OUTRAGE OVER SOCIAL INJUSTICE

In response to national and global outrage concerning the lynching of George Floyd and all innocent, unarmed citizens of color, who have been murdered at the hands of misguided members of the law enforcement community;

The Men of Essex, Inc. (www.menofessex.org) as an historically African American service organization of business and professional men, is compelled to express its support for all those organizations and individuals who are engaged in peaceful protest demanding transformative change amid the pandemics of police brutality, social injustice, and COVID-19. Their impact upon Communities and Citizens of Color has been devastating.

Further, in response to the urgent need in the communities we serve for mentoring, affordable housing, and healthcare programs and criminal justice reform, the Men of Essex is expanding its mission to engage in an agenda of advocacy to address these pressing issues.

Sixty-two years ago, in February 1958, at the headwaters of the Civil Rights Movement, a group of visionary and pioneering African - American business and professional Men (Negro Men during that era), established an organization in response to a huge and glaring disparity that existed, concerning the outstanding scholastic and athletic achievements of African - American (Negro) high school athletes and athlete scholars in Essex County, New Jersey. A huge omission existed that consigned their extraordinary achievements to oblivion by the predominantly white - run organizations of the era.

This glaring disparity led to the founding of the Men of Essex, Inc as a 501 c3 not for profit corporation, whose dual mission was to recognize outstanding athletic and scholastic achievement and to provide financial assistance (student aid) for students in the urban nexus pursuing their higher education aspirations.

As a result, the Inaugural "Essex Awards" recognition ceremony was held May 1958, as a salute to the best and brightest athlete scholars and the establishment in 1960 of a companion fundraising event: the prestigious Men of Essex Golf Classic. Proceeds raised from both events benefit the Men of Essex Student Aid Fund.

This visionary group of distinguished Men of Color took matters one step further however: establish a non-discriminatory, all-inclusive, merit - based policy to recognize all outstanding high school athletes, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, etc. — the best and brightest — representing public, private and parochial secondary institutions.

Over the past 61 years, the 22 communities of Essex County have been served with an unsurpassed brand of excellence through the annual presentation of both events: this legacy has achieved stature and distinction as the 'gold standard in high school athletic and scholastic circles and the golf classic has risen to attract major support among our corporate and civic partners.

Regrettably, as a result of the unforeseen and devastating impact of the COVID 19 pandemic upon the communities we serve and upon the economy — much to the dismay of all concerned — these circumstances forced the cancellation of both events this year.

In closing, our pioneering legacy exemplifies a tradition of inclusiveness to mitigate longstanding inequities and disparities. We will continue to uphold the American Ideal and cultivate our proud heritage of racial parity and social justice in all our affairs.

Respectfully,
Darryl L. Jeffries
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President