



Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

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The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage Statement on the Death of George Floyd

May 28th, 2020 (Saint Paul) - On Monday, May 25th, George Floyd died in the custody of those bound by law to protect him. We condemn the actions of the officers responsible for this tragic loss of life and for the trauma they caused to the community. As the Chair of the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage, a state agency charged with advising the State on issues that impact our constituents, I grappled with how to respond to this tragic incident. An incident that did not have to end in death. We have endured this pain far too long and these incidents seem to continuously take us further backwards versus moving us forward to freedom, and liberation.

When will this end? When will this be over? When will we as African heritage people no longer be afraid when we see red, blue and white lights flash behind us?

We mourn the immoral and unnecessary loss of our brother, George Floyd. We lift up his family and friends whose lives were forever changed. We call for healing for people in the community who are struggling with the pain of having this old wound of police brutality ripped open again and again.

While we commend the swift actions of Chief Medaria Arradondo for terminating the officers and Mayor Jacob Frey for calling for their arrest, we understand that this is just the beginning. We know the process that follows in the wake of these tragedies is retraumatizing for our people and will fuel high tensions. Tensions that have been stoked for months by the impact of a global pandemic. A pandemic that has impacted our community disproportionately in every category: infection, mortality, employment, housing, etc. Yet, the fight for justice must continue, even under these historical circumstances.

The Council is calling on community members to—while prioritizing their safety—make sure their voices are heard. We are encouraging community members to call their legislators, county commissioner and city council member and ask them to support the demands of the community. We invite them to reach out and support Black-led organizations or to facilitate healing conversations with loved ones and, if they have the strength for it, people they disagree with. To lawmakers and those in authority, we are asking that they refuse to see this as an isolated event and join in our efforts to right a system with a long history and pattern of offences against Minnesotans of African Heritage.

We come together united against racism, violence, injustice, and the many other inequities that our African heritage community faces on a continual basis. Now is the time to take a stand and employ our position of power and action against law enforcement practices that fail our community and deny justice for all.

I am working closely with the Executive Director of the Council to ensure we are listening to communities and working with State agencies and the Governor's office to create a path forward. Racism, injustice, and brutality have a long history in this state. We cannot afford to repeat outdated solutions. We must recommit to working on new solutions and visioning a world where we are not expected to suffer quietly under oppression.



Nerita Hughes
Chair of the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

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The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;
- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;
- Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;
- Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and
- Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.

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