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| **June 2, 2020**  As an organization that has worked for all of its history to stop violence, we mourn the tragic, brutal, indefensible murder of George Floyd. Structural racism and police brutality pervade our culture; the pain these abuses cause, and the ways they diminish us as a country are incalculable.  The devaluation of Black lives and the disparate treatment of minorities – in our justice, healthcare, education, economic and other systems – are intolerable, and have gone on for much too long. We cannot continue to criminalize race and poverty or to tolerate violence of any kind.  George Floyd, of course, is only the latest Black life lost to police brutality. Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner are among the many whose names are familiar to us for the worst possible reason – because they were killed by police. There are so many more whose names are carved on tombstones, and across the hearts of those who loved them, yet, whose deaths went unrecorded in every sense -- and did not create headlines, inspire public rage or calls for justice.  There must not be one more.  Nor can we allow the health disparities that take such a disproportionate toll on the Black community, especially now as we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue. We need to remake our justice system, our health care system, our education system, and our economic system in ways that are equitable, responsive and fair.  This rebuilding demands deep changes in our culture as well, and more and better services to help children recover from the trauma of the violence and bias that are all around them.  For many years, Futures Without Violence has worked to change multiple systems. We know that progress does not come easily, but that it is possible. We need accountability for police officers, prosecutors and judges and we need to root out all those who are biased or abusive. The days when police accountability can be sporadic or lacking altogether are over.  The terrible pain we feel right now is creating an unprecedented, broad-based wave of activism, especially among our young people of color. And activism leads to change. The responsibility belongs to each one of us to be sure that change is swift, meaningful and lasting. As a country, we cannot allow racism, injustice and violence to continue. As people of conscience, we each have a duty to resist and to act. The costs of silence and inaction are a burden we can no longer bear. |
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