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Local Partners Work Together to Promote Black-Owned Businesses

Ithaca, NY – The national conversation regarding systemic racism and police brutality following the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others, provide new opportunities to shed light on current and historical racial disparities, make space for important conversations, and consider how to uplift and support those most impacted by these injustices. Last week's Juneteenth (June 19th) also attracted major attention as a day to reflect and celebrate the emancipation of those who have been enslaved in the United States and the need to promote policies and systems and invest in initiatives that advance equity and fairness in our community.

As local organizations focused on economic development and supporting local businesses, Business Leaders of Colors, the Tompkins Chamber, and the City of Ithaca Office of Economic Development are committed to helping address structural racism within our community and nation, and support the growth and success of black owned businesses. In support of this effort, the groups have worked together to establish and promote a list of local black-owned businesses in Ithaca and Tompkins County.

Gladys Brangman is the founder of Business Leaders of Colors, a network of business owners, entrepreneurs, consultants, and social justice leaders. "We appreciate the opportunity to partner with the Tompkins Chamber and the City of Ithaca. We will be hosting the list on our website and will continue to support black owned businesses in our community and beyond", said Brangman.

"The Tompkins Chamber is pleased to support this initiative, and I encourage local residents and business owners to consider making purchases from these great local businesses", said Jennifer Tavares, Tompkins Chamber President. "The Chamber values diversity and inclusion, and intends to do our part to address systemic racism through policies, actions, and programming."

Entrepreneurship and business ownership are important paths for individuals and communities to grow wealth and access opportunity. But lack of investment in black businesses has severely impacted the opportunity for equity and inclusion. African-American entrepreneurs are more

frequently denied SBA loans and many are unable to access venture capital or traditional commercial loans because of strict underwriting requirements.

"Beyond this list, we are also committed to working together with our partners to expand the number of businesses owned by black women and men in Ithaca", said Mayor Svante Myrick. "We need new efforts that directly address barriers and provide pathways to black ownership including investment in entrepreneurship, direct technical assistance, and the creation of local character-based lending vehicles."

Buying goods and services from black-owned businesses is one immediate way that individual businesses and community members can help combat structural racism and show solidarity with local black business owners. The new list can be found at: www.businessleadersofcolors.com and will be updated on an ongoing basis.

Owners who wish for their business to be added are encouraged to reach out to Gladys Brangman gladys@businessleadersofcolors.com.