June 1, 2020

Religious Leaders Council Members Statement on the Death of George Floyd

As a community of multiple faiths, we collectively struggle to breathe as we mourn the death of Mr. George Floyd and all the deaths this tragedy represents. That no mercy was afforded to Mr. Floyd during his dying moments is atrocious. We denounce the judgment Officer Chauvin used to pin Mr. Floyd's neck to the street with his knee. It is cruel and inhumane that Mr. Floyd's dying cries for his deceased mother and pleas that he could not breathe in the moments before his death went unanswered. This is an appalling repeat of the deaths that result from racial bias and policing done wrong.

We hold that all life is sacred and stand in solidarity that black lives matter. We support policing done well and all the officers who strive to serve and protect the community and preserve trust and integrity. We support the tireless efforts of individuals and organizations that are built on the principles of love, peace, understanding, and healing. We acknowledge the defeat that people striving for peace and unity feel in the wake of such loss of life and recognize the many efforts to repair and rebuild the lives of people impacted by violence in all of its forms.[1]

As a community of communities, we call upon our faith leaders to lead the way in building bridges across traditions. We support non-violent action to reform structural and systemic impediments to justice and equity, while unequivocally condemning violence and the destruction of property. We encourage the planning of virtual gatherings that include the participation of people from neighboring faith traditions as a way to see the other and hear the other as part of the beloved community.

We call upon those in political leadership, the news media, as well as leaders of non-profit, corporate, and sacred institutions to join in efforts that lead away from polarization and towards a unity of purpose that fosters a shared future. This will uphold the dignity of each person as created in the image of G-d. This will foster conditions to deescalate tensions and build understanding and healing.

Co-Conveners: Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez - Archdiocese of Philadelphia | Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez - Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania | Imam Anwar Muhaimin - Quba Masjid | Rabbi David Straus - Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

Members: Kavneet Singh Pannu- American Sikh Council | Rev. Robert Collier Sr., Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity | Rabbi Eric Yanoff & Rabbi Annie Lewis-

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[1]Through *Zones of Peac*e, the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia has committed the resources of its congregations, members, and rich religious traditions to recognize organizations that are pioneering creative responses to violence, elevate their leadership, and help reform our region by working to address the root causes of violence. For more information visit:

https://www.interfaithphiladelphia.org/zones-of-peace

Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia | Kevin Jagoe- Unitarian Universalist Association, Central Eastern Region | Kim Bokim, Won Institute of Graduate Studies | Congregation Mikveh Israel- Rabbi Albert Gabbai | Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell- Delaware Valley Association of Reform Rabbis | Rev. Peggy Johnson- Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church | Rev. Stephen Kriss, Franconia Conference, Mennonite Church USA | Rev. Glenn McDowell, Philadelphia Gospel Movement |Dr. Wilson Goode, Philadelphia Leadership Foundation | Rev. Ruth Faith Santana-Grace, Presbytery of Philadelphia | Rabbi David Glazenberg-Krainin, Rabbinical Assembly of Greater Philadelphia Region | Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Reconstructing Judaism | Lt. Col. Larry Ashcroft and Rev. Bonnie Carmada, Salvation Army of Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware | Bishop Patricia Davenport, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ECLA | Dr. Gity Etemad, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahai's of Philadelphia | Rev. Jesse Garner , Executive Committee Chair, Interfaith Philadelphia | Rev. Edward Livingston, Interfaith Philadelphia Religious Leaders Coordinator | Rev. John B. Hougen, Interfaith Philadelphia, Zones of Peace Coordinator

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