

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF JUSTICE
Black and Jewish Clergy Dialogue Group
June 5, 2020

In 1963, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., mounted the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the March on Washington, he talked about his dream for equality and justice. He said he had a dream that his four little children would one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Today, 52 years after Dr. King's death, the recent killings of African Americans by police officers are profound reminders that his dream has not come true.

In the wake of the brutal killing of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, we make this statement to renew and enhance understanding and engagement between our communities. We have come together to express our deep convictions about the violence of police brutality that is killing African Americans and the integrity of our nation. Our different religious traditions are rooted in the basic belief that all humanity is created in the image of God. As clergy, we must affirm the equality of all people, regardless of race or creed, because of our divine creator. We must speak now in solidarity with those most impacted by racism, social inequities, and police violence.

In the words of the Talmud, "The first human being was created alone to teach that one who takes a single life is considered as having destroyed an entire world, while one who saves a single life is deemed to have saved an entire world" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5) We hear the commanding voice of Deuteronomy 22:3: "You must not remain indifferent." In the texts of Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18, we are called to speak pastorally and prophetically against the dehumanization of God's creation. In Romans 12:15, we are reminded to show compassion for those who mourn. We weep with our neighbors in Silver Spring who mourn the deaths of Robert White and Finan Berhe. We extend words of sympathy and caring to their families.

As Concerned Clergy, we are inspired by the prophetic warning of Dr. King, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." So, we speak to raise a moral voice to condemn police brutality and the institutional and systemic racism that condones it. We will pray, preach and act to protect the values of justice and peace that form the core of all that is sacred. We implore the purveyors of violence and destruction to desist from activities that destroy our just message. And we invite individuals of conscience throughout this community to come together in fellowship and dialogue, to hear each other and work together to realize the vision of racial equity.

Together, we must speak out. Together, we must reject hatred. Together, we must listen to each other. Together, we must overcome the forces of division and hate to build a community of love. Compelled by the commandment of our shared Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)," we pledge to work together to do the sacred goal of ending injustice in our community.

With Blessings of Friendship and Peace,

Rev. Dr. Rosetta Robinson, The Heartising Table

Rabbi Michael Safra, B'nai Israel Congregation

Rev. Donald Kelly, Olive Branch Community Church

Rabbi Abbi Sharfsky, Jewish Community Relations Council

Rabbi Alana Suskin, Pomegranate Initiative

Rabbi Marc D. Israel, Tikvat Israel Congregation

Rev. James L. Stowe, Montgomery County Office of Human Rights

Rabbi Aderet Drucker, the Den Collective