



WESTCHESTER BLACK BAR ASSOCIATION, INC.

333 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 219, White Plains, NY 10605 www.wbbany.org

June 5, 2020

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STATEMENT OF THE WESTCHESTER BLACK BAR ASSOCIATION, INC. ON THE RECENT KILLINGS OF GEORGE FLOYD, BREONNA TAYLOR, AND AHMAUD ARBERY

The Westchester Black Bar Association, Inc. (“WBBA”) extends sincere condolences to the families, loved ones, and friends of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and pray for God’s blessings and comfort as the nation mourns the loss of these innocent victims of racial injustice.

WBBA condemns the racially motivated invidious conduct of the police officers and other perpetrators involved in the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. The WBBA joins the families of the victims in a thunderous call for equality and justice that will result in the prosecution, conviction, and punishment of all of the perpetrators - with all deliberate speed.

On Memorial Day, May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year old unarmed Black man, was killed by four Minneapolis Police Officers on a public street. Officer Derek Chauvin was caught on video deliberately and intentionally pressing his knee into Mr. Floyd’s neck for 8:46 minutes, as Mr. Floyd pleaded for his life- “I can’t breathe”- rendering him unconscious, while three other officers at the scene aided and abetted in his murder.

On March 13, 2020, three police officers in Louisville, Kentucky forcibly entered the apartment of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year old Black EMT, in the middle of the night. They shot Ms. Taylor at least eight times, killing her as she was sleeping. The officers alleged that they were there to serve a no-knock search warrant in a narcotics investigation.

On February 23, 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed, 25-year old Black man, was shot to death while jogging in a neighborhood outside Brunswick, Georgia, after having been relentlessly pursued by two white men in a pickup truck. The two white men - a father and son named Gregory and Travis McMichael - were not arrested or charged with a crime until May, when the case received national public attention.

Despite clear video evidence of the crimes being committed in the Floyd and Arbery cases, the local prosecutors failed to make any arrests or bring charges until the videos gained national attention. None of the officers were arrested in Taylor’s case. These recent killings of unarmed Black men and women are a continuation of a long line of murders of Black people, particularly unarmed Black males, including Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice – the consequences of racial injustice and police brutality in America.

Our purpose is to improve the integrity and standards of professionalism in the legal community; improve public confidence in the judicial system and the administration of justice; promote and encourage independence, diversity, and inclusion in the judiciary and in the court system; and uphold the promise of equality, fairness, and justice for all under the law regardless of race, color, sex, creed, or national origin.



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The WBBA respects and applauds the many protestors of all races and cultures throughout the country and worldwide who are standing up for justice, police accountability, and equal treatment of people of color in the United States. While we must exercise our constitutional rights to protest, we must also bring about change at the ballot box and by changing existing laws in order to guarantee equal justice under the law. The WBBA supports the changes pending in the New York State Legislature on Police Accountability.

The WBBA challenges government officials to ensure that our laws and rules protect and respect the rights of all people as required by the Constitutions of the United States and the state of New York. We must create and empower a diverse community task force to make recommendations to eliminate systemic racism including issues of:

1. Police use of force, racial profiling, and discriminatory policing practices;
2. Discrimination in the workplace; and
3. Equal opportunity for employment and education for people of color.

The WBBA encourages our members to continue their involvement in the social justice movement, and to use their skills and experience as attorneys to bring about change; to offer pro bono legal representation of protesters and others in the fight for justice; and to make financial commitments to fund causes for justice.

The WBBA recognizes that voting is essential to bring about real change. However, we can only achieve that goal if we all do our part. We urge our members to become involved in the electoral process by protecting the right to vote from voter suppression and practices designed to prevent people of color from voting in upcoming elections - whether in New York or in a battleground state. We must engage local communities to participate in the 2020 census, to register and vote, to serve on juries, and to become active in neighborhood associations.

Finally, the Pledge of Allegiance of the United States concludes with the words "*one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*" This solemn oath rings hollow when one considers that George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and the long line of Black people who have been and continue to be deprived of life, liberty, and basic freedoms because of the color of their skin. We must continue to stand united and remain vigilant in the fight for justice for all.

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