



Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

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WE RAISE OUR VOICES IN SOLIDARITY – July 14, 2020

Like most Americans, we are horrified by the images of systemic racism and brutality that we have read about and seen in the media in recent weeks. In June 2020, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that seven in ten Black Americans feel they have experienced discrimination or police mistreatment during their lifetime; nearly fifty percent of the respondents expressed fear for their lives during incidents of intolerance and bigotry. Some thirty percent of the Black American participants reported they had experienced unfair treatment by police during traffic stops and other incidental encounters within the past year. Additionally, The New York Times recently reported that a large majority of Americans view racism as a major problem in the United States. A slimmer but still-large majority of the public see the recent deaths of several Black Americans as a systemic problem of policing in the United States.

After considering the evidence of so many wrongful deaths and unfair treatment by the very public servants who should have been protecting Black Americans and other peoples of color, we hereby petition the public servants in every municipality and county in the State of California, as well as the California State Government to end police brutality and create a multi-dimensional process to address systemic racism within their respective jurisdictions.

As stated by The Movement for Black Lives document titled “The Time Has Come to Defund the Police”:

“The time has come to defund the police...to redefine public safety and accountability for the 21st century and beyond...For much of U.S. history, law enforcement meant implementing laws that were explicitly designed to subjugate Black people and enforce white supremacy... We must divest from excessive, brutal, and discriminatory policing and invest in a vision of community safety that works for everyone...When we talk about defunding the police, we're talking about making a major pivot in national priorities. We need to see a shift from massive spending on police that doesn't keep us safe, to a massive investment in a shared vision of community safety that actually works...” <https://m4bl.org/defund-the-police/>

We join others in focusing on the needs of the Black community, especially the right to live in basic safety and without fear from the police or others. We must envision public safety in new ways and re-establish trust in our public servants. Where funding can be shifted to functions that can be accomplished by social workers or public servants without guns, then we encourage all municipalities to work towards making such changes.

If a local or regional government cannot guarantee that the full Bill of Rights of every citizen will be protected, it has a duty to reform or replace the systems under its control with new structures that can guarantee every human the full ability to flourish in "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." We stand ready to partner with our state and local governments to re-envision what policing our communities can look like in the future to assure that all people have equal rights under the law.

Respectfully,

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County and the Social Justice Alliance of CCC

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