Building a Culture of Respect—Call for Racial Equality
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The recent and highly-publicized deaths of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia, and countless others have left many of us feeling sad, angry, and/or frustrated over these events. Each and every one is loved by their families and whose lives mattered; and are now lost forever to the violence fueled by racism, indifference, and white supremacy woven into the fabric of our nation. Their deaths, like many others, serve as National tragedies that have left us fighting for justice. At the same time, we are at war with a novel virus—COVID-19, which is disproportionately affecting Black Americans (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Blacks make up 22% of all COVID-19 even though they represent just 12.7% of the population). We are combatting the virus of COVID-19; the virus of injustice; the virus of prejudice; and the virus of inequity.

What happened to George Floyd exposed the systematic racism in our nation. Systemic racism is reflected in disparities regarding wealth, income, criminal justice, employment, health care, education, civil rights, police brutality, and education, among other factors. We must fight for reforms in policing and address issues of racial and economic inequality. This is a historic time, too important for us to remain silent.

As an organization, we stand together in giving voice to the underrepresented, promoting social justice, equity, excellence, and opportunity for all. We must renew our call to action as individuals, a community, and an advocacy organization. We must push back the fear of raising our voices and challenge biased actions and unfair practices. Most of all, we can listen and educate ourselves and others. As Maya Angelou stated, “When we know better, we do better.”

Blacks In Government, Inc. is proud to stand in solidarity with more than 16 Black national policy-making organizations who are part of a task force charged with developing a clarion statement on the need to reform the criminal justice system. The immediate need for this statement was made evident by the horrific murder of Mr. George Floyd. We will join with these like-minded organizations to call for legislation to address criminal justice reform to examine police accountability, community relations among law enforcement, and public safety concerns. We will also support our youth in the Black Lives Matter movement in their non-violent protests for the murder of George Floyd. In part, their demands call for an end to the criminalization, incarceration, and killing of our people. Our voices will not be silenced, as our collective vote supports those who will act on reform. We must elect government officials who are responsive to our demands, at the local, state, and national level.

Also, we encourage our members to engage in actions that challenge bias and unfair practices, such as:

- Writing letters to members of Congress and the Senate
  - US Senate (www.senate.gov)
  - US House of Representatives (www.house.gov)
- Sign a petition, such as those found on the NAACP
(https://naacp.org/campaigns/we-are-done-dying/) and Change (www.change.org) websites.

• Vote, both nationally and locally.
• Communicate with your local and state government officials about how they can help end racism in the communities they represent.
• Work to make the American dream of an inclusive society a goal for all of us, and not just for some.

As members of our respective communities, we learn and work best when we engage with those that do not look, think, or act like us. We must step outside our comfort zone and be open to learn from people different from us and not be afraid to ask questions about things when you don’t know something about someone else’s background. This is how we grow compassion and bridge gaps that could otherwise be filled with unawareness, or worse, intolerance. Remember, for many in our communities, racism has always been a difficult topic of discussion. We must initiate these difficult conversations and strive to create an environment where diversity, tolerance, and acceptance of our differences are valued above all.

I challenge each of you to demonstrate this same commitment through not only your words but also through your actions. “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy” (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

(Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

I leave you a heart-rendering message of inspiration and hope by Terry Barber, “When the World Falls Apart.”

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwopYU1juKM&feature=youtu.be

Greetings BIG Family and Friends,

National Organization of Blacks In Government, Inc. joins the nation in prayers for the family of Mr. George Floyd. Recent events relative to the unnecessary and unconscionable death of Mr. Floyd has prompted me, on behalf of our great organization, to go on the record and stand in support of the efforts being put forth to bring to justice all law enforcement individuals involved in the callous act of violence, to yet another African-American male.

Please join the BIG Family and others as we mourn with all of the families and friends impacted by the continuous acts of racial indifference and injustice perpetuated by certain law enforcement individuals.

This event as well as other historical egregious acts against our people, only strengthen our resolve to put forth a Clarion call for Solidarity of the many organizations, and individuals that are advocates for
peace, truth, and justice. As former National President Obama stated, “We have to mobilize to raise awareness, and we have to organize and cast our ballots to make sure that we elect candidates who will act on reform.”

We are tired of the lamentations and weeping of mothers over the slaughter of their children. Comfort will only come when the perpetrators are weeded out and held accountable for their undeniable acts of violence against people of color.

*We can make a difference, and the ballot box can serve as the catalyst to “Let justice run down like water, righteous like a mighty stream.”*

Think BIG and Vote!