



**Province VIII Black African Ministries &
The Western Region of the Union of Black Episcopalians
Joint Statement on Systemic Racism and
The Imminent Duties of The Episcopal Church**

The video of George Floyd's excruciating eight-minute 46-second death under the knees of a Minneapolis police officer and with the aid of fellow officers was the final catalyst in an ongoing controversy in the United States.

What is causing [unarmed Black Americans](#)¹ to die at such a disproportionately higher rate than White Americans during police interactions? Why is law enforcement being called to intervene in some of these minor situations at all?

We are dying for trivial reasons, even from police officer intrusions while residing peacefully in our homes. We name some of the souls lost:

Laquan McDonald

Ahmaud Arbery

Freddie Gray

Atatiana Jefferson

Botham Jean

Philando Castile

Trayvon Martin

Breonna Taylor

Tamir Rice

Eric Garner

Rayshard Brooks

For the many others who are unnamed here, may they also have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief but life eternal. The tragic deaths of many African-American people shine light on the broader problem that we face.

The Episcopal Church expresses that all are welcome. However, it must recognize that many of its members fail to understand that the full participation of Black Americans in some communities continues at a slow pace. Others may, in fact, recognize a problem but choose to remain silent. Some of our members know about systemic racism, race bias, and exclusion and *deliberately* perpetuate these injustices through the overt and covert acts. They are never held accountable.

The world now sees how our public service institutions are severely compromised. The Police use unnecessary lethal force against Black Americans and other people of color with impunity. It is unconscionable for police officers with a history of racially biased misconduct to continue to benefit from [qualified immunity](#).²

Public law enforcement is one institution within an interdependent system of businesses, government agencies, institutions, and laws that shape our quality of life. Black Americans experience the impact of racism navigating that interdependent system daily. Race bias and implied racism within social structures form an artificial barrier to the success for many of us in an insidious way that does not involve overt hatred, discrimination, or even name-calling.

In the corporate workplace, we are commonly overlooked for higher-level positions. We are excluded from preferred compensation although we possess the qualifications and experience. Often, the positions we *do* take are not rewarded with pay equitable to white colleagues who hold similar roles.

Exclusionary tactics used against black and brown people are most damaging to personal productivity and economic self-realization:

- Unfair mortgage and auto lending rates
- Predatory payday and student loans
- [Racial bias](#)³ in medical treatment
- Generational economic impacts of housing discrimination and [redlining](#)⁴
- Generational traumas of racism and related mental health issues

We also implore that budgets customarily approved for law enforcement in Province VIII be reallocated to fund community programs to address the numerous health, safety, and financial obstacles people of color experience:

- Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender discrimination
- Public school and early education pay disparities
- Qualified daycare assistance and immunization programs
- After school and summer academic programs
- Nutrition education, [urban food desert](#),⁵ and fresh produce subsidies
- Affordable mental health services and education
- Physical, safety, and fitness barriers which form in dense urban and lower-income neighborhoods
- Public and private college income-based tuition assistance
- Professional trade school and journeymen assistance
- Legal, business advisory, and financial support for entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Consumer financial services and community banking
- Voter registration, access to polls, and vote-by-mail
- Rehabilitation and reintroduction of former felons to career, housing, and transportation

Internet-based training and augmented reality (AR) curriculum can help to mitigate costs while improving reach.

In addition to the budgetary changes listed above, we make the following recommendations to state and municipal governments in Province VIII and the UBE Western Region:

1. Restructure school systems for the equitable distribution of public and private funds for supplies, music, arts, sports, college preparation, and honors programs.
2. Public, private, and charter schools must require teachers to undergo anti-racism training for accreditation.
3. Shift the paradigm to a positive, proactive, and preventative focus on black children to thwart problems that feed the pipeline-to-prison, including the restructuring of educational systems.
4. Lobby the federal government to produce a comprehensive plan and timeline for reparations.
5. Cease to conduct business with entities and individuals that invest in the prison industry either through publicly traded stock or private partnership ownership.

Our justice system is more merciful to white defendants. The rate of [federal criminal sentences](#)⁶ for Black and White Americans for the same crimes are highly disproportionate.

If we succeed at improving the health, safety, and economic security of urban centers and black neighborhoods, the rates of gun violence, crime, and homicide will decrease. According to an International Money Fund (IMF) study, [higher growth means lower crime](#).⁷ It did in Central America. Our challenges are not unique.

Because we observe that the fabric of white privilege and entitlement has not disappeared, we implore The Episcopal Church take the following fundamental actions in Province VIII and the UBE Western Region:

1. Investigate what is causing Province VIII leadership positions not to be more representative of people of color.
2. Add a leadership position in diocesan administration whose specific role is to address the societal issues that disproportionately affect black and brown people.
3. Take action to ensure that people of color who dedicate their time, finances, and energy to sustain local parishes earn that recognition and a pathway to leadership.
4. Require all dioceses budget resources and certified anti-racism training for all clergy, lay leaders, and staff as the new diocesan standard.
5. Explore how the Diocese of Maryland [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)⁸ can serve as a model in other dioceses.
6. Training must openly address what white privilege means and the impact it has on non-whites.

Statements on equity and inclusion alone do not alter complex human conditioning.

We understand that it can be particularly challenging for White Americans to speak openly about racism and there are reasons for this. However, we must ask ourselves: "How can we proclaim that we have the love of Christ if we remain silent while innocent people continue to die?"

We have celebrated our identity as African descendants in The Episcopal Church for over 220 years. Today, we remain resilient and proud of our heritage despite the sadness that sometimes arises from the centuries-old fight against marginalization.

Here, in Province VIII and the UBE Western Region, our progressive social policies, although under continued verbal threats by the White House, are helping our country to preserve the years of work and sacrifice of our forebears to achieve social justice. Clearly, our work is not yet done.

Let us take this critical step together to hold ourselves accountable to equity, inclusion, and reconciliation as a body of believers with Christ as our guide.

The late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said,

"He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."

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7. [Higher growth means lower crime](#)
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Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

If you are concerned about systemic racism or what [The Episcopal Church](#) is doing to address these issues, we strongly recommend that you contact your parish leadership and the administrative offices of your Diocese.