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We All Have a Role To Play

Carolina Youth Coalition [admin@carolinayouth.org]

Sent: Wednesday, June 03, 2020 9:44 AM

To: Steve Johnston



CAROLINA YOUTH COALITION

Dear Friends of CYC,

Over the last few months, many of us have seen our lives turned upside down due to the more than 100,000 U.S. deaths, widespread unemployment, and fear of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many other organizations working with our most under-resourced populations, we have found ways to pivot during this crisis and assist them in whatever way possible.

Yet, over the past few weeks we have found ourselves dismayed at the senseless deaths of Ahmaud Arberry, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless other Black people. Our cities are now erupting with anger, fear, and frustration over seeing these stories again and again and again. As we mourn their loss, these tragedies are painful reminders of the longstanding racial inequities and mistreatment that have lingered throughout not only our justice system but also our healthcare, education, and other institutions within our country.

Black lives matter. It should not need to be declared but in the wake of the tragedies and such stark evidence of unequal dispensing of justice - it must. This is not a political statement but a fact. As a Black male, this last week has been particularly difficult as many of us relive traumatic experiences from our pasts and long for a future in which our presence is no longer threatening and people that look like me are no longer denied basic civil rights. I cannot rest. I cannot be silent.

As an organization that supports Black youth and families, we cannot be silent. Our values will not allow it. In our role as advocates for economic mobility, CYC recognizes that we must not merely assist our Fellows in navigating systems and institutions that have historically disadvantaged their communities. We must also be vocal in condemning any form of racism and bigotry in our society.

We will continue to encourage our youth to use their voices and empower them with the tools to advocate for the change they desire in their community and in this world. This past Monday, we hosted a Community Circle, a safe, supportive space for our Fellows to voice and constructively channel their fears, frustrations, and grief as they navigate this difficult time. We will continue to provide avenues for them to engage in open dialogue, educate themselves about issues facing our city and country, and perhaps most importantly, influence the shape of the structural, legislative change urgently required to calm the symptoms (e.g., anger, marching, rioting, protesting) of the underlying issues that inflict our country.

I am encouraged by people of all races and backgrounds within our community, and across this nation, who are banding together to work toward repairing our imperfect country. I am inspired by our youth who are speaking out and demanding that we at last put an end to the evils that

have plagued the generations before them.

Today, and always, we stand firmly in solidarity with those that fight peacefully for justice, demand equality, and work to dismantle systems of oppression in all forms. Violence is not the answer and neither is a return to the status quo. May we all have the courage to speak up in the presence of injustice and uplift the voices, experiences, and concerns of our most marginalized communities.

We all have a role to play. Together, let us all work toward creating a just society free of racism, discrimination, and bigotry. Our unity in action can bring change.


Sincerely,

Aaron Randolph
Executive Director



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