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June 12, 2020

We are appalled and devastated by the recent murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by police officers. We are heartbroken by the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, who was chased and gunned down in the street by a former police officer and his son while out for a jog. In Wyoming, we continue to grieve the deaths at the hands of law enforcement of Robbie Ramirez in Laramie and Andy Antelope in Riverton.

And we know these words we write today will not heal any wounds, alleviate any pain, or make any meaningful progress toward ending racial injustice in this country. These words will not bring about the change we so deeply desire.

But we also know that if we join with those already raising your voices, those who are making change through protest and policy, those who are actively fighting back against unfairness and oppression, and if we stand in solidarity with you—we will succeed together.

We hope that in the coming days, weeks, and months an overwhelming majority of Americans and American institutions will also join these millions of voices and demand change.

In addition to speaking out, we're also looking inward and working to address weaknesses and deficiencies within the ESPC organization. We recognize one of our worst shortcomings that we urgently need to address is our general lack of diversity on the board and on staff. As part of an effort to tackle this problem directly, we've begun the process of restructuring the board to include not only representation from our member groups, but to also include volunteer members from the Wyoming community.

The ESPC board and staff also began work at the end of 2019 on an ongoing facilitated project and commitment to better understand and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion within our coalition. This is envisioned not as a one-time training or series of trainings, but rather as an ongoing feature and priority of the organization's work from now on.

We know this is not enough. But it's a start. And we are always be open to feedback and ideas about how we can be doing better—so please speak up and let us know if you see ways we can improve.

As a nation, we must address police brutality and actively oppose racism in this country and in our local communities.

We cannot continue to accept the immoral, disproportionate, and unwarranted police violence and intimidation historically and continuously directed at people of color.

The number of unarmed black people who have been killed by police officers and vigilantes in recent years is monstrous and unacceptable. And it's telling.

We remember Eric Garner—another unarmed black man who was choked to death by a police officer on the street, also captured on video. And we remember the reason for his physical arrest: the police said they suspected him of selling single cigarettes from a pack.

We remember Tamir Rice—a 12-year old boy.

We remember Sandra Bland—the sickening video of her being brutalized by a cop on the street, and who was later found hanged in a jail cell in Texas. The officer said he pulled her over for failing to signal while changing lanes.

We remember Oscar Grant.

We remember Samuel Dubose.

We remember Walter Scott.

We remember Trayvon Martin.

We remember so many more. Too many more.

And then we must ask: How many police injustices, beatings, and murders don't we know about because they were not caught on video?

To make progress, we also need to understand our history.

The American malady of racism and white supremacy is not a new phenomenon. It is, in fact, one of our oldest and worst problems as a nation.

It is a product and consequence of slavery.

It is part of this country's ongoing legacy of racism, ignorance- and hate-based ideologies, and lynchings.

It is a direct descendent of the Jim Crow system of segregation and discrimination.

It is a result of racist federal policies like redlining.

It has been compounded and worsened by the militarization of our police forces and the infiltration of white supremacist extremists onto these forces, with an unhealthy lack of transparency. It is perpetuated by unfounded fear, as well as explicit and implicit bias. And it is a symptom of a criminal justice system that has unequally applied the law—and disproportionately targeted and harmed black people, Native Americans, and other people of color—throughout this nation's history.

The stunning disparities that continue to exist in America will not disappear without sustained and direct action to correct them. And as we have seen in recent weeks, the spread of COVID-19 has only highlighted the inequities that have long existed.

To our allies in this struggle who see injustice and who are looking for ways to act, we at ESPC are working to offer resources and actions you can take personally, as well as policy proposals specific to Wyoming.

We know what is possible when we work together to demand and create equality, and when we insist that our state and nation live up to our core values and take on the essential, timeless work of bringing about a more perfect union.

These words will not end racial injustice in America. But our collective solidarity, commitment, and common purpose will.

Sincerely,

Chris Merrill
Executive Director

Tara Muir
Board Chair

P.S. Voting is more important than ever. Please sign up to receive election reminders, [get registered to vote](#) or [update your registration](#), and [apply for an absentee ballot](#) if needed.