



Kingston Interfaith Council
KingstonInterfaithCouncil.org • KingstonInterfaithCouncil@gmail.com
30 Pine Grove Ave • Kingston, NY 12401

May 29, 2020

The Daily Freeman
79 Hurley Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401

RE: Interfaith Leaders Outraged at the Racist Murder of George Floyd

Dear Editor,

“Please, please, I can’t breathe.” This plea was among the last words that George Floyd spoke before his life ended. George Floyd, a black man—a son, a brother, a friend, a co-worker—was killed Monday in Minneapolis by a police officer who ground his knee into Floyd’s neck and refused to let up, despite the victim’s pleas, which even bystanders could hear from a distance. Three other police officers stood by and watched as Floyd died. On Wednesday, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey asked in a press conference, ““Why is the man who killed George Floyd not in jail? If you had done it, or I had done it, we would be behind bars right now.”

We, the members of the Kingston Interfaith Council, express our sympathy to George Floyd’s family and friends who have not only lost a loved one, but are left in grief and anger as a result of police violence against an African American man who was handcuffed and powerless. We offer our deep sadness for layers of pain and anguish that those closest to George now carry, and pray that they will find comfort and peace in their hearts, and justice in the weeks ahead.

We express our outrage that another black man was killed by white police officers who are charged with protecting every person in our communities. The words of George Floyd, “I can’t breathe,” echo those of Eric Garner who six years ago was suffocated by a police officer for selling “single cigarettes” on a New York City sidewalk. This kind of ongoing violence, the treatment of another person as though they were not human, and the more general harassment of black men by police must stop.

We cannot pretend that the behavior of our law enforcement officers is unrelated to the behavior of those citizens in Georgia who on February 3, 2020, gunned down Ahmaud Arbery while he was out for his morning run. We understand the grief and outrage that is being expressed by crowds in Minneapolis. “A riot,” Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “is the language of the unheard.” We denounce the racist provocations and threats of retaliatory violence on the part of some of our political leaders and call on all our elected officials to do justice.

We recognize that our society is infected by entrenched, persistent, deadly racism. Socio-economic and political policies, practices, and attitudes both reflect and are shaped by the false belief that whites are superior to “black and brown” people, and that black men are especially dangerous and to be feared. We lament and repent of our own complicity in creating and sustaining systems that privilege many of us and simultaneously oppress and kill communities and persons of color. The lies, injustices, complicity, oppression, and murder must stop.

The Kingston Interfaith Council is committed to engaging with our larger community in conversations about race and racism. We are committed and will continue to press for conversations concerning race and community policing in Kingston and Ulster County, even though our efforts thus far have borne fewer fruits than we hoped. Still, we have the audacity to hope that we can become different together. We desire to live into the conviction, that every single person is beloved, every person is of infinite value, and every person is created to enjoy full and abundant life, in community.

Sincerely,

The Kingston Interfaith Council

The Kingston Interfaith Council (KIC) is a gathering of religious and spiritual leaders who provide a collective moral response to the concerns of our community in the Kingston, NY area. We join together in actions that promote interreligious understanding, social justice, and community.