

From: Oregon AFSCME <prcstaff@oregonafscme.org>
Date: June 12, 2020 at 3:32:14 PM MDT
To: ██████████@██████████.com
Subject: Talking About Race
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Dear ██████████,

It is evident that the wording or interpretation of the recent brief statement from the Council 75 Executive Board has troubled some of our members. While there are some within our membership that feel the letter was offensive, others feel it was not strong enough. Regardless, the purpose of the letter was to denounce racism and white supremacy when and where it exists. Furthermore, the Board statement was meant to condemn the systemic failures that have contributed to Black Americans being three times more likely to be killed by police than White or Latino Americans.

The Council 75 Executive Board decided to send that statement in order to take a righteous stand against racism and to publicly express our union's values which are to fight for a society in which all are treated equal.

And we are not alone. Law enforcement agencies and police unions across the country have put out similar statements denouncing the murder of George Floyd.

While it may be easier to think of the killing of George Floyd as a heinous act committed by a bad cop, it is not. Mr. Floyd's killing was only one in a long pattern of police brutality and indifference against Black people that is being seen across the country with a lack of accountability or reform in the system which is why this latest act has boiled over now. Everyone knows this is not all law enforcement, but when officers feel safe to act inhumanely, to intentionally or directly cause the death of another human while restrained, and even while knowingly on camera as happened with Mr. Floyd, there are obviously inherent and heinous problems in the system that need to be exposed and reformed. Actions like this that go unchecked, unchallenged or when perpetrators are not held accountable for their actions or worse when peers come to the defense of their illegal actions all of those things end up hurting the reputation and trust of all public safety professionals in the community.

Conversation on police reforms have already begun and as a union that represents law enforcement and corrections we know that we (our public safety members and Council 75 staff) need to be part of these conversations. It's important we help protect legitimate due process rights and maintain safe working environments while pursuing meaningful and judicious improvements in the systems internal to policing and society to ensure all are treated with dignity and equality. Reforms are necessary not only to ensure accountability for law enforcement officers who are guilty of any form of police brutality, but to also ensure that our members, all people in the community and inmates are safe.

Some members have expressed some concerns about the Black Caucus meeting for Black members and staff only, that this is a time that we should be coming together. These meetings are much like a women's caucus or veterans group - there is a safety in sharing one's hopes, fears and pain with someone who has had a similar life experience, where you do not have to explain how you feel or justify it because the other person knows what it feels like. These spaces are intended for this purpose.

We want to thank you for the jobs you do every day to serve the community. We appreciate your dedicated service. I know as members who take your role as public safety officers seriously, seeing a video of a police officer disregard humanity and protocols by murdering a black man who was restrained and non-combative was horrendous. Thank you for being a part of these conversations. We need your voice.

In Solidarity,

Stacy Chamberlain
Executive Director, Oregon AFSCME

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