

DRAFT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION



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Human Rights Commission

Recommendation Number 20200605-001a: Recommendation to Council to publicly call for the community to stand in solidarity with the family of George Floyd

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Commission of the City of Austin advocates on behalf of human rights for all people in the City of Austin and the broader community; and

WHEREAS, recent events have heightened awareness of police killings of citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission recommends the Austin City Council to issue the following statement:

FROM: The Mayor and Council of the City of Austin

TO: The Citizens of Austin, Texas

Just days ago, George Floyd was murdered. We are calling on the community to stand in solidarity with his family. We are calling on allies of communities of color to speak up in their spheres of influence. We are calling on people of color to continue to agitate and not give up until justice is served.

The purpose of law enforcement is to protect and serve. Communities, and especially communities of color, can't trust law enforcement officers - who are paid with taxpayer money - to use their authority in an appropriate way if Black Americans keep dying at the hands of those who are paid to protect and serve.

As much as things change, some things remain the same. There are social inequities, institutional racism, and just pure hatred alive and well in our society. These systems of inequities are allowed to thrive, and people are dying because of it. For every video clip we see, there are surely thousands of clips we do not, and the abuse of power has to stop!

The oppression and threat to black lives is not only an atrocity that justifies outrage and unrest, but it is a human rights issue that reflects a toxic culture that perpetuates systemic racism and injustice. During this COVID-19 pandemic we have seen our minority communities suffer the most and there has not been any targeted intervention to prevent any further deaths or cases. Our black and brown communities are at constant threat for their lives. This is not the community Austin prides itself in being as welcoming and embracing.

We need empathetic leadership that feels the pain our marginalized communities experience daily and just and equitable policies that do not discriminate against people based on their race, color and ethnicity. Our leadership must be accountable for all acts of discrimination, and we demand accountability. We need to actively address it in every sector- socially, economically and environmentally. Our policies, laws, practices, and systems need to prioritize restorative justice to rectify the injustices that have been ingrained in our culture. We need a cultural shift, not only on a basic human level, but also on a systemic level that will benefit generations to come.

Since the founding of our country, Black and Brown folks have been brutalized in the most inhumane ways imaginable. The murders of George Floyd and Mike Ramos by the police are only the latest offenses. If we are to arrive at peace, the state must be held accountable for its acts of violence.

Nothing has been done to make lives better after numerous school shootings, a peaceful protest of taking a knee by Colin Kaepernick, and numerous police shootings of minority community members. Nothing meaningful was ever done to Clive Bundy who forcibly took over a federal building, or to the racists who ravaged Richmond, VA.

Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Sean Reed. Steven DeMarco Taylor. Rekia Boyd. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland. Freddie Gray. Trayvon Martin. Atatiana Jefferson. Philando Castile. These names are among many members of the black community whose lives were taken at the hands of the police.

Officers who murder citizens deserve to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Black men and women are being murdered by the very people we pay, with our tax dollars, to protect them. As humans, people of color are beyond tired of seeing this same system fail them over and over again. At some point, enough is enough. We stand in solidarity with thousands of other people and we demand that justice for all of our people be made today!

Date of Approval: June 5, 2020

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____

Jonathan Babiak

Staff Liaison, Human Rights Commission