

To the greater Seattle Jewish Community,

There are no words to describe the heartache that our community feels following the continuous and systemic oppression that has plagued our country since its inception. We are heartbroken and mourn for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, and countless others, killed at the hands of police officers nationwide. It is disheartening and frustrating to see our city police's recent excessive use of force as a response to peaceful protests and the media's focus on looting and riots.

As young Jews, we cannot help but notice that the calls for justice made by the greater Black Lives Matter movement are echoed in the Torah. We don't wish to quote scripture to a group of people that have studied and lived that scripture much more than we may have, but the words "Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof/Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue" צְדָקָה צְדָקָה תִּרְדּוּף (Deuteronomy 16:18) ring loud and clear in our ears. We are commanded to actively pursue justice and today that is what we ask your help in doing.

We are absolutely sure that by now each of you have seen hours upon hours of news coverage. Many of you may have already engaged with social media posts and donated to organizations like the Minnesota Freedom Fund or the ACLU. Further, you may have engaged in tough conversations with friends and family about race, the criminal justice system, and how to support and make space for the Black community. We commend you for your actions, and there are many more ways that we can show our support. We welcome your input in a dialogue in ways that are possible and feasible for our communities to come together around this issue.

For white allies, It's important that we acknowledge what our role needs to look like. While it's important for us to be vocal and outspoken (especially within our own communities), it's essential to not overstep our place and take the spotlight away from the Black community and our Jewish sisters and brothers of color. Our first step is to listen to Black people. We must acknowledge our own biases and how we have benefitted from a system designed against people of color. This will be uncomfortable and difficult, but when we start understanding where our own biases lie, we ourselves will be able to start our journeys of education and pursuit of justice.

The first and easiest step is to **make a call for justice** for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and all victims of police brutality amongst the American black community. That in itself is not political. This is a conversation of racial injustice at a structural, institutional, and interpersonal level.

Secondly, at the end of this email, we have included a **few petitions that we urge you to sign**. These petitions call for an investigation involved in the murder of Breonna Taylor and demand racial data on the Coronavirus as [African Americans are placed at a high risk of testing positive for COVID-19](#).

Another petition we have attached outlines the call to reinvest a portion of the Seattle Police Department budget ([read more here for reasoning behind this ask](#)). We demand further action by Seattle City Council including a zero-based re-examination of all funds currently spent on the police. We believe as much as half the \$406 million currently spent on policing are better redeployed against the root causes of injustice and systemic racism including community-based social programs, affordable housing, access to physical and mental healthcare, education in Seattle Public Schools and poverty in general.

We have attached two documents to this email, one detailing email templates on how to contact Washington State and King County officials if individuals wish to directly address a myriad of specific local issues, and the other a list of organizations working to empower Black communities and further the goal of eliminating racial discrimination.

Finally, **there is a protest planned by the [King County Equity Now Coalition](#) for 3pm on Friday, June 19th, beginning at the corner of E Union and 23rd Ave . We plan to march ourselves and we welcome any and all congregants to join us.** However, we understand the risks of protesting during the current pandemic and that many may not be able to attend such a large demonstration for fear of contracting or spreading an extremely dangerous and contagious disease such as COVID-19. Fortunately, there are other ways we can help, as instructed by leaders of the King County Equity Now march. Your local synagogues and Jewish organizations will be collecting and distributing:

- Donations of Sanitary Supplies: Masks, Hand Sanitizer, and Disposable Gloves
- Donations of non-perishable food: Granola Bars, Bottled Water, Chips, etc.

If you would like to contribute to this effort, please reach out to your congregation to find out ways that you can help. While many of us, as white Jews, will never be able to completely comprehend the struggle of Black Americans living amongst us, we know the atrocities that occur when people are bystanders to injustice. We need to have the tough, uncomfortable conversations about race and the systemic problems that have plagued this nation for 400 years. This is an ongoing conversation and fight that transcends social media posts and marches. As influential members of the Greater Seattle Jewish Community and the University of Washington, we encourage you to speak out against systemic oppression of the Black community.

We cannot and will not stand idly by.

Signed:

Jeremy Cordova, Temple B'nai Torah  
Michael Fishman, Temple Beth Am and Hillel UW  
Allegra Long, Temple De Hirsch Sinai  
Ellie Paris, Temple Beth Am  
Benjamin Weiner, Temple De Hirsch Sinai

Elijah Angelov, Kavana Cooperative  
Gabriella Green, Hillel UW

[Organizations that you can support working to end racial discrimination](#)

[Demand Racial Data on the coronavirus](#)

[Defunding the Seattle Police Department](#)

[Demand an investigation into the death of Breonna Taylor](#)

[Contact your King County and Seattle officials](#)