



## **The Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence Statement on Racism and State Violence – August 2020 Executive Summary**

Racism, state violence, transphobia, white supremacy and colonialism are a clear and present danger to Black people across the United States – and to the Black people of Kentucky. Breonna Taylor lost her life on March 13, 2020 when 8 shots struck her from police that fired “wantonly and blindly<sup>1</sup>” into her apartment during the execution of a no-knock search warrant in a drug investigation. David McAtee was shot and killed by a National Guardsman on June 1, 2020 while police were dispersing a crowd outside McAtee’s modest BBQ restaurant with pepper balls, for violation of curfew. And we cannot forget the young black men and boys like Michael Newby (19 years old) who was shot in the back 3 times by police on January 3, 2004 during a drug bust or the black student at Jeffersontown High School on November 21, 2017 that was tased, held down, and kicked by school police officers. Kentucky’s systems failed them.

In other states, systems failed Trayvon Martin (aged 17) on February 26, 2012 when he was shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, FL while walking alone after visiting a convenience store; and more recently, Ahmaud Arbery on February 23, 2020 when he was chased down and shot by armed white men while jogging in Brunswick, GA; Tony McDade, a Black trans man, who was killed by police on May 27, 2020 in Tallahassee, FL; Dreasjon Reed who was shot by police on May 6, 2020 in Indianapolis, IN.

George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 and a spark ignited what may well be the fourth wave of nationwide uprisings after the Red Summer of 1919, the protests and racial violence during the Depression and WWII, and the civil rights movement of the 1960’s.<sup>2</sup> Police denied a man, a Black man, the right to breathe. Twenty (20) times George told the officer whose knee was pressing into his neck, “I CAN’T BREATHE,” but he only had enough breath to say once, “Momma, I love you. Tell my kids I love them. I’m dead.”<sup>3</sup>

The horror and brutality of the murders of Breonna, David, Michael, Trayvon, Ahmaud, Tony, Dreasjon and George, and hundreds of other Black men, women and children are front and

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<sup>1</sup> *Termination Letter of Detective Brett Hankinson* – posted on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/LMPD/status/1275559612410888193/photo/1>.

<sup>2</sup> National Geographic, [\*2020 is not 1968: To understand today’s protest, you must look further back\*](#), June 11, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian, [\*George Floyd told officers ‘I can’t breathe’ more than 20 times, transcripts show\*](#), Maanvi Singh, July 9, 2020.

center in our world today, but the oppression of Black and Indigenous people has been a stain on our nation since the moment white people set foot on the land including Kentucky.

A report by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights states, “*While African Americans remain the largest minority in Kentucky, they also remain the people with some of the greatest disadvantages in the socio-economic structure. They still linger in educational attainments; have inordinate and high poverty levels; face racial disparity in the criminal justice system; and are underrepresented in many elected and appointed positions. Our state and national communities need improvements in policies and practices in ways that will result in a more equal society in the areas of business and employment, education, housing, financial transactions, healthcare and help-related funding.*”<sup>4</sup>

The legacy of Black people in Kentucky is one of unfulfilled civil rights. The time has come to take a stand in solidarity; acknowledge our hand in ignoring the truth of our state’s systemic failure to protect Black people, Indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC)<sup>5</sup>; envision a Kentucky devoid of racial inequities; and publicly commit to change.

## **I. Who We Are**

The Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCADV) is the statewide coalition whose membership includes all state-funded primary service domestic violence shelter programs. KCADV is grounded in the belief that domestic violence is a form of power-based violence and is part of a systematic pattern of oppression. Systems created by a combination of privilege, prejudice and institutional power enable and spread racial and cultural disparities, injustices, and violence. “

## **II. Our Understanding**

As a Coalition built on the foundation of social justice, non-discrimination, and meaningful access, KCADV calls itself to account in this statement. Our staff, members, and Board of Directors are re-educating ourselves and re-aligning our efforts so that we are better positioned to fully promote racial equality and equity.

We understand that:

- We must acknowledge BIPOC’s historical trauma and lived experiences of violence and center those traumas and experiences in our commitments to move forward.

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<sup>4</sup> Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, *The State of African Americans in Kentucky*, February 2009, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> The term BIPOC is used to reflect many different groups of people of which Black people are one. It is used humbly and in deference to those who have created their own names. For the purposes of this statement, we have identified Black people as the focus. [Why the term “BIPOC” is so complicated, explained by linguists](#), Constance Grady, VOX June 30, 2020.

- BIPOC communities are not homogeneous and that opinions on what is necessary now vary in both substance and degree.
- We must be responsible for the ways in which our work directly contradicts our values. For example, we adopt and support nonviolence, self-determination, freedom for all people and the right to bodily autonomy as we simultaneously contribute to a pro-arrest and oppressive system that is designed to isolate, control, and punish. We promote the ideas of equity and freedom as we ignore and minimize the real risks faced by Black survivors who interact with a policing system that threatens the safety of their families and their very existence. We must recognize when this contradiction occurs and be able to justify our actions, or adopt another course when we cannot justify them.
- There are many advocates who have been leading the fight against entrenched racism and merciless crimes; however, as a Coalition, we must continue to embrace the message as a call to action across the entire Commonwealth while strengthening our unity to deliver and implement the message.
- [BlackLivesMatter](#). This statement stands alone and is not to be compared or contrasted with any other community of people. It does not devalue the lives of other people. Rather, it says that we have historically oppressed, injured, and traumatized Black people in this country and that we must finally recognize and admit this and make a change.

### **III. Our Vision**

We envision a world where all human beings have inherent value, even when they cause harm; where people have what they need – adequate and nutritious food, safe and affordable housing, quality education and healthcare, meaningful work, and time with family and friends; and where all people are treated with cultural competence by acknowledging each and every person’s innocence, worthiness and competence in their own experiences.

A better world is within our reach. It is time to transform not only our oppressive institutions, but also ourselves.