



AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR CLIENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY

Once again, we grieve the most recent high-profile loss of a black life due to police brutality. George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, was killed by Minneapolis Police in broad daylight while he pleaded, repeatedly, for his life.

While the killing of George Floyd has captured international attention, police brutality and law enforcement violence against black and brown lives is not new. At its heart, it is a natural outcome of the systemic racism that infects every aspect of our society and its constructs. From the criminal justice system and discriminatory hiring practices, to underfunded schools and a nearly insurmountable earnings gap, there is no hiding from the reach of deeply rooted bias against the black community. The United States of America is a nation built on racism and to move forward, we must acknowledge that incidents like the one in Minneapolis this week are its byproducts.

We here at Legal Action of Wisconsin believe it is important to say it: America is a racist nation, with systems rooted in injustice and hatred. The systemic nature of this shameful truth must be recognized before it can be eliminated. As a firm, Legal Action has committed to fight more purposefully for racial justice in our communities and service areas. That commitment includes speaking out to denounce incidents like the one that ended George Floyd's life. These incidents do not occur in a vacuum – no, they and the people who commit them are products of a system built to protect the perpetrators more than the victims. It is offensive to our collective humanity that, after such an event, we see lists of accomplishments and awards received by the officers who kill people like George Floyd, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, Laquan McDonald, and Philando Castile (to name only a few), while the victims are depicted as criminals or dangerous offenders whose very existence became a death sentence.

It isn't enough to be outraged, however. We as a firm recognize that words without action are hollow, and if we are to use our work to bring change to this broken system, we must start the change from within. Legal Action has started this work. We will take an honest, unfiltered look at ourselves, holding up an unforgiving mirror to the way we do our work. Any commitment to work for racial justice in our community requires a similar commitment for our internal operations and practices. It requires humility and the capacity to acknowledge the biases and racism that exist in our organization even as we commit to practicing anti-racism. It also requires us to listen to our colleagues, friends, and community for their criticism and input on how to improve, and then put that into action.

Progress also requires us to engage with our community, and the black community in particular, to identify the most effective and immediate ways to boost the voices in greatest need. In short, those of us who are not black owe the black community our solidarity as fellow humans to combat the evils of racism that reach into every corner of our country. We must be better allies.

We write today with a simple message to our community at large, and to the black community specifically: we see you. We see what is being done to you and your families, and we mourn with you. We will not stand idly by as you struggle. We will strive to improve ourselves, our work, and our communities to address and end racial injustices. Even as those of us who are not black cannot know the depth of your pain, or your fear, or your exhaustion, we see you and we stand with you.



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