

## YWCA Metropolitan Chicago Statement May 29, 2020

Monday was yet another day of infamy for America as the world witnessed the grotesque murder of George Floyd at the hands ... knee ... of law enforcement. We also witnessed the potentially lethal lies of Amy Cooper that hauntingly echo the countless lethal lies before them, like those that lead to the lynching of thousands, including a 14 year old boy from Chicago named Emmett Till. All of this comes amidst COVID-19's glaringly disproportionate impact on the African American community. In Chicago, let us not forget that 73% of all coronavirus-related deaths were initially confined to the Black community.

African Americans, accustomed to daily indignities, and survivors of historic trauma, are collectively heartbroken and exhausted. Like the many health disparities and social ills that have long existed and led to COVID's disproportionate toll, we know these cruelties and injustices vividly displayed on Monday have also long existed, since 1619 in fact when the first Africans landed on America's soil. Just because they weren't captured on film does not mean they weren't happening.

Social media is ablaze with commentary and outrage. African Americans are almost uniformly focused on the tragic death and monstrous lie. Others seem overly concerned about Amy Cooper's mistreatment of her dog. Some are not paying attention at all, mistakenly believing that none of this is about them. Yet the growing chorus of outrage from those outside the African American community has been powerful, too. Monday was about all of us. We are one humanity.

***"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."***

These are the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There is a reason they resonate so timelessly. It is always a mistake to consider Dr. King a hero for African Americans. He is a hero for all of us. He did not die fighting for the civil and human rights of Black people. He died fighting for America and all it could and should be. Justice for African Americans, and any other oppressed people, is the only way to make our nation and our world whole. From the children still sitting in cages on the border, the homeless veterans with nowhere to turn to escape a lethal pathogen, the LGBTQ teenagers bullied by their peers, the terrified women sheltering in place with their abusers – we must find the capacity to combat all of this. Because it affects all of us.

YWCA's mission is to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. Never has our mission been more important. Every single word of it: Peace. Justice. Freedom. Dignity. For all.

As we re-emerge from our COVID-19 isolation, we are doubling down on our mission and our commitment to building a more just world. We WILL eliminate racism. We WILL empower women. **We will not just promote, we will ENSURE peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for ALL.**