

**STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON ON THE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD**

George Floyd.
Breonna Taylor.
Charleena Lyles.
Alton Sterling.
Tamir Rice.
Laquan McDonald.
Michael Brown.
Eric Garner.
Atatiana Jefferson.
And so many more.

It is a tragically familiar pattern—a Black man, woman, or child senselessly killed by police. Desperate pleas of “I can’t breathe” ignored. Communities left in anguish by the loss of life and the absence of accountability. Law enforcement responding with unwarranted violence toward grieving communities as they come together, arms and voices raised, demanding change. *This must stop.*

We join those in Seattle, Tacoma and cities and towns across the country who are demanding that all human beings be treated with respect and dignity, and that Black Lives Matter.

We, in the Pacific Northwest, pride ourselves on our progressive ideals and commitment to social justice. This stated commitment to equality means nothing absent concrete action. People of color are suffering under systems of oppressions that deny their humanity and refuse them protection under the law. We see this oppression in the demographics of those incarcerated. We see it in the way law enforcement polices communities of color. We see it in the way men and women of color are treated throughout the criminal legal system.

Our criminal legal system has operated as a tool of oppression fueled by the myth of white supremacy. It is a system that controls and further marginalizes people of color. It is a system that must be forced to change. We call on law enforcement to stop racial profiling. We call on law enforcement to discontinue and disavow the use of excessive force. We call on law enforcement to stop using brutal tactics on peaceful protesters—including tear gas, “flash-bang” grenades, pepper spray, rubber bullets, tasers, and batons.

We call on the Department of Justice (DOJ) to recommit to its stated mission of holding police accountable for abuses of power. We call on both the DOJ and the United States Attorney’s Office to publicly recognize the damaging impacts institutionalized discrimination, mass incarceration, and white supremacy have on people and communities of color. We ask that they acknowledge that racism, bias, and targeted policing have created a culture of violence, oppression, and inequality within the criminal legal system.

We call on ourselves to recognize that as individuals we each have our own personal work to do as well. As a defense community, although we strive to fight to bring equality, dignity, and compassion to our courts, we need to do more. We must aggressively call out racism and injustice wherever and whenever we encounter them. We must challenge those longstanding legal practices and traditions that perpetuate discrimination and inequality.

Working for this community is both a privilege and an honor. We recognize that with that privilege comes a duty to fight against racism, white supremacy, and inequality in all forms. It is our sincere hope that individuals, organizations, and institutions in Seattle, Tacoma, the Pacific Northwest and beyond will join us as we meet this responsibility with determination.

We can do better. We must do better.