

Media Release

A Breath...for a Moment

A Statement on behalf of the Black Clergy of the Metropolitan Association, New York Conference, United Church of Christ, regarding the verdicts in the George Floyd case*

The verdict of guilty for Derek Chauvin for the wanton murder of George Floyd allows us a momentary breath. We waited with anticipation, knowing the evidence was overwhelming but knowing disappointment and outrage was possible. But the three guilty verdicts allow us to exhale, this time. The murder of George Floyd, before our very eyes, tore the cover off of the veneer of civility that covers racism in America and especially in police forces across this country. Yet, none of us can afford to believe that this one important victory is but one battle in the war against racism, white supremacy, fear and hate.

Yes, we dare to hope that the movement that caught fire after George Floyd's murder in 2020 will continue and will continue to galvanize all of us to the ramparts in the fight for justice. Yet, we must steel ourselves, for this fight is not for the fainthearted, the timid, the bellicose talkers who disappear when action is required or those who hide behind a religion of privilege that disregards the humanity of the oppressed.

We can exhale, we can breathe for a moment, for a verdict of acquittal for Chauvin surely would have set our cities on fire. But we cannot relax our resolve and indeed, in the words of Congresswoman Maxine Waters, we must increase our confrontation. That is because Derek Chauvin will be dismissed as a "bad-apple-cop" when the real problem is systemic racism in our society and in our criminal justice system. Modern policing began in the slavers' need to repress black bodies and that repression only increased after the Civil War. Therefore, exhale for now, but our watchword must be vigilance. Our mantra must be No Justice-No Peace. Our vision must be a society where human beings are actually humane to one another. Our expectation is to hold all leaders and institutions accountable to needs of the people. No defeat will be the last word. No challenge will go unmet. No family's pain will be unshared and not supported by the community of love.

Exhale. Take a breath for a moment. Then, the work, the fight, still calls forth for us to stand with courage and tenacity. May we partner with God in this work for surely God hears the cries of God's people and calls us to be warriors of grace *and* justice.

***The Metro Black Clergy of the Metropolitan Association, New York Conference, United Church of Christ, is an independent group of ministers who serve churches and ministries in the Metropolitan Association, UCC, in the New York City metropolitan region (including Westchester and Nassau counties). For further comments on this or other relevant issues, you may contact Rev. Reginald Brantley at Revre3@gmail.com or 516-459-8850, to be connected to a representative spokesperson.**