

Sustainable Madison Committee Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

This past month, Madison became one of many cities across the world to protest the recent police-involved murder of George Floyd, and to advocate for addressing systemic racism that continues to exist in our community and endangers Black lives. The death of George Floyd should also be viewed in the context of other recent killings of Black people, including emergency medical technician Breonna Taylor, while sleeping in her home, by Louisville police who broke into the wrong home looking for someone who was already arrested, and Ahmaud Arbery, murdered while jogging by white supremacist vigilantes. The Sustainable Madison Committee joins with those who seek to dismantle white supremacy, and advocates for systemic reform on the use of deadly force by law enforcement agencies and an increased review of discriminatory practices that infer a racial bias.

The criminal injustice system is bad for public and planetary health. Due to structural racism, which is a persistent form of environmental violence and a societal plague, Black people bear disproportionate health impacts from environmental and climate injustices, such as exposure to industrial pollution, heat waves, and flooding - putting people at higher risk for other health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, Black people are significantly more concerned about the climate crisis and other environmental health issues than White people (Ballew et al., 2020).

Historically and currently, Black people provide critical leadership in protecting the health of our planet (EPA, 2020; Hip Hop Caucus, 2020; NAACP, 2020). However, structural racism, mass incarceration, state violence, and police brutality are deadly, dangerous, and exhausting, making it difficult for the level of leadership needed from Black people to be fully realized. People who care about the health of our local environment and planet must actively support transformation of the criminal injustice system, including policies and practices that simultaneously dismantle the parts of policing that allow officers to commit crimes with impunity and strategies that build up communities (The Opportunity Agenda, 2016).

While it is crucial to speak out against racism, mass incarceration, and police violence, it is not enough. We must continue to listen to, learn from, fund, and amplify Black people and organizations. To start with, if you are in a financial position to lift up organizations doing the work, please donate to [Freedom Inc.](#), [Urban Triage](#), and [Free the 350 Bail Fund](#). If you want to learn more about environmental and climate justice work, check out the [NAACP](#), [Climate Justice Alliance](#), and [Hip Hop Caucus](#).

The Sustainable Madison Committee is entering the fight for Black lives by committing to take thoughtful and collaborative action to respond in all the ways that Black people can't breathe, such as advocating to transform the criminal injustice system in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. If we do not actively work to dismantle systems of oppression and white supremacy, then the environment will continue to burn around us and the City of Madison will never be sustainable, let alone survive. Let us engage this emergent moment in a way that accelerates making our vision for a more equitable and sustainable world a reality.

References:

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