



A Statement from the APA New York Metro Chapter
authored by the Diversity Committee

Sean Reed, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade—were each killed by police in May 2020. Their names are joining the list of countless Black lives that have been taken by the hands of white supremacy and police violence. These instances only add to the grief and exhaustion of communities of color, who, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, make up the majority of our essential workers, have experienced a rise in hate crimes, and have faced the most significant losses. This week has weighed particularly heavy, as many of us took to the streets in peaceful protest to stand with Black lives—only to be met with even more police brutality, racialized narratives on ‘riots,’ and we are still waiting for justice to be served.

Firstly, we want to say to our fellow Black and Brown planners that we see you and know that you are grieving. You are trying your best to make a difference and improve your communities, while they are dying from this pandemic. On top of that, there is senseless police brutality, the psychological trauma of fearing your own safety and that of your loved ones, and the need to care for yourselves and family members—all while balancing the expectation to show up to your job fully, without space to process what has happened. This burden is too much to carry alone, and we want to support you.

We as urban planners, designers, and policy-makers must be accountable for the decisions we make. Our planning governs where people live and what access to resources they have. COVID-19 has only further unveiled the deep roots of racism in planning and policy: whether it is about environmental safety, housing security, education access, employment and business opportunities, transportation options, health care access, or the ability to feel safe in our streets. **These are direct outcomes of our historic and ongoing discriminatory and predatory practices.**

We have a responsibility to correct these wrongs and ensure that Black and Brown communities not only survive, but thrive. It is part of our ethical responsibility as planners to “seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity [...] and to promote racial and economic integration,” ([AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct 2016, A.1.f](#)).

We are calling on our entire community of professionals to stand with Black lives and take action. Here are just a few examples of how:

1. **Self-educate and reflect on personal biases and privileges**, and lead a life of continued unlearning and commitment to anti-racism within your communities.
 - If you are White, please explore the abundance of [anti-racism resources online](#).
 - If you are a non-Black person of color, check out resources for solidarity against anti-Blackness, such as this [Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit](#).
2. **Advocate for diversity, inclusion, and equity** in your workplace and work. Ensure your work is intentionally and deeply working towards acknowledging and correcting historical wrongs, centering communities of color, and achieving equitable outcomes. This is not a public relations opportunity, this is a matter of responsibility to people’s livelihoods.



3. **Advocate for municipal budget reforms to redirect funding from harmful policing and prison infrastructure** to reinvest in workforce development, education, childcare, youth and community programming, affordable housing, public transit, and environmental justice in communities of color.
4. **Advocate for police accountability and criminal justice reform** to advance public safety and justice for communities of color. For example, in New York, there have been several State bills considered to:
 - **Repeal 50a**, which currently allows police departments to hide officer misconduct and discipline information (A2513-O'Donnell/S3695-Bailey);
 - **Require police departments to report on racial disparities** in enforcement of low-level encounters and killings (A-Lentol/S18304-Hoylman);
 - **Strengthen the Attorney General's office to investigate and prosecute** all cases of police killings and misconduct (A1601-Perry/S2574-Bailey);
 - **Reduce racially disparate unnecessary arrests** (A4053-Aubry/52571-Bailey); and
 - Other actions to establish more restorative criminal justice approaches.
5. **Donate**, not only for bail of protestors that are currently standing up for Black lives, but also to organizations advocating for change and supporting families impacted by the incarceration system, including immigrants in ICE detention. A few suggestions:
 - [Communities United for Police Reform](#)
 - [Brooklyn Community Bail Fund](#)
 - [National Bail Fund Network](#) for a national directory of bail funds by state
6. **Support your Black and Brown friends and colleagues**. Be sure to check yourselves that you're genuinely concerned about their wellbeing and providing meaningful support, not just attempting to prove your allyship or non-racism.

Together, we can end the cycle of racial inequality and promote more just and equitable communities. Please continue to hold each other during this time, and stay safe and healthy. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us. Our Diversity Committee (DivComm) is also available as a resource and can be reached at diversity@nyplanning.org.

In Solidarity,

American Planning Association New York Metro Chapter