

Open Letter to Community Regarding Racial Justice

The Coalition of Religious Leaders of Millburn and Short Hills

June 10, 2020

Writing on the margins of a newspaper while imprisoned, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."* As the Coalition of Religious Leaders of Millburn and Short Hills, we attest to the truth of these words, even as we acknowledge that our faith-based understanding of why they are true may be different. We understand that our differences, however they may be defined and expressed, serve only to emphasize the importance of that which we hold in common, which is much. Each of the faith communities represented on the Coalition – Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu – hold dear the values of the inherent worth of human life and the importance of respecting the dignity of all people. These values are central to religions and spiritual traditions worldwide, which underscores their importance to humankind in general, and to conversations about justice in particular.

We are united in our commitment to liberate ourselves from prejudice and intolerance and actively pursue racial justice and equality. We join our voices with those who are demanding justice for the heinous murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and the countless others named and unnamed who have suffered at the hands of people and institutions charged to protect, serve and to keep the peace. We demand a full, transparent investigation into the death of Maurice Gordon and a swift and appropriate response to the findings. We lament the despair of those who continue to be excluded from the opportunities and ways of living that so many of us take for granted. We hope and pray those of us with privilege will use that privilege, and raise our voices, our resources, and our actions for a privilege-free society that would eradicate the unjust structures of racial inequality. We must act now because it is only in action that we will ever come to be a nation without the stain of racism. We must work to bring about the transformation of heart and mind that is needed if this nation is truly to be a land of safety and opportunity for all people.

We are united in our common understanding that Dr. King's words ring true today as they did all of those decades ago: *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."* We are encouraged by the number of peaceful protests across the country and the world, including the thousand plus neighbors at the Millburn Rally for Black Lives on June 7, 2020. We are hopeful that these actions will be successful in effecting the systemic change that is both necessary and long overdue. Though we cannot erase past injustice, we vow to seek reconciliation and to work against present and future injustices. We commit to ongoing advocacy around this issue, lending our voices and our prayers to all those engaged in this sacred and holy work so that all people may realize their potential and live in peace.

With Prayers for both Peace and Action,

The Rev. Dr. Johann J. Bosman, Community Congregational Church, Short Hills

Alan C. Breindel, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills

Sister Sandra DiMasi, SSJ, St. Rose of Lima Church

Rabbi Matthew D. Gewirtz, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills

Margo Greenfield, St. Stephen's, Millburn

Nadia Halim, Millburn and Short Hills Islamic Families Association

Reverend Robert E. Harahan, St. Rose of Lima Church

The Rev. Jennifer Testa Hrynyk, Community Congregational Church, Short Hills

Humzah Jaffar, Millburn and Short Hills Islamic Foundation

Reema Jaffar, MD, Millburn and Short Hills Islamic Families Association

Rabbi David C. Levy, AJC New Jersey Regional Director

Rev. Eyesha Marable, Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Millburn

Janet Aulet Maulbeck, Executive Director, Interweave

Neerja and Shashank Mishra, Millburn Short Hills Desi Club

Rabbi Karen R. Perolman, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills

Pastor Tristan Shin, Christ Church, Short Hills

The Rev. Bowie Snodgrass, Christ Church, Short Hills

Cantor Howard M. Stahl, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills

Rabbi Leah H. Sternberg, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills

The Rev. Paula J. Toland, Rector, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Millburn

Rev. Caroline S. Unzaga, Wyoming Presbyterian Church, Millburn

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