

For Immediate Release

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JOINT STATEMENT FROM FEDERAL DEFENDERS ON THE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

The moral arc of the universe, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, bends towards justice. And yet, we all saw that arc snap again under a police officer's white knee on George Floyd's Black neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds. That knee has been placed on too many Black necks before and too often without repercussions.

This time must be different. While we can kneel in solidarity with Mr. Floyd, we also must stand up and demand that racism, overt and implicit, be acknowledged and confronted.

As federal public and community defenders, we represent the overwhelming majority of those charged with crimes in federal court, most of whom are minorities, of all colors and orientations. We have witnessed "wars" on drugs and crime become dog whistles for hate and racism. Intentions to make communities safe are hijacked by other insidious agendas. The war on crime is a new Jim Crow that permeates our criminal justice system. Daily, we see charges that are too harsh, sentences that are too long, and a system that turns a blind eye to oppressive structural racism because it seems to fear "too much justice."

George Floyd died face down, gasping and begging to breathe. It is well beyond time for us all to say, "Enough."

We are better than this; we can be just and empathetic. We can do what is right and what is moral. We can keep communities safe by holding out our hand to help, aware of our own failings and biases.

And in this crucible of anger, we take a breath, and begin to repair the moral arc and bend it back towards justice.

As federal defenders, we stand with many like George Floyd who have been held down and denied their humanity. It is our job, our calling. It is our privilege. For George Floyd and all of our clients, we renew our longstanding commitment to fight daily for equal justice.

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