



The National Center on Violence Against
Women in the Black Community

Last night as many of us prepared for bed, we did so with heavy hearts. Over the past couple of months, most of our nation has become accustomed to living with some level of fear or strain and navigating how to manage them - if not for ourselves then for the people that we love. Our communities have dealt with unimaginable loss. Many of us have also recognized that while we have been on this journey together, our experiences during this time are vastly different. For Communities of Color, the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis has underscored what we have long known. There are serious systemic inequities that mean life or death for our communities, our families, and our friends. These inequities are rooted in a longstanding history of racism and oppression - one that left us disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The reality of this historic and current trauma is palpable and yesterday as we prepared to sleep many of us watched as Minneapolis burned, and we felt our hearts shatter.

Our community, the Black community, has been required to move through our country half-healed, continuously reminded of the reality that our individual and collective safety is fleeting. Whether being stopped by the police, going for a jog, or simply lying in our beds asleep, we are not safe. A walk in the park could have easily ended with Chris Cooper's death. We are in pain, we are grieving, we are frustrated, and we are afraid. Yet, we remain committed to our individual and collective healing because simply put, we must. George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor have families and friends that loved them and they each deserved better. They were our sisters and brothers and unfortunately, like so many others, the loss of their lives is now a call to action.

As an organization whose mission is to address domestic violence and sexual assault, access to safety is one of Ujima's core principles. Sharing information about trauma and healing is our work. As a Black organization addressing these issues, we are acutely aware that our experiences with trauma are intersectional - domestic violence and sexual assault are rooted in the very same oppression that stifles our community. So, as we begin a new day, we are reminded that we are connected to a larger mission, one that calls on the humanity within each of us and centers OUR safety - our short and long-term safety, as well as, our physical, emotional, and economic safety. We serve a community in pain, in a nation that has long struggled with the virus of racism and now seeks to address the COVID virus. We are reminded that we cannot focus on finding a vaccine for one without addressing the conditions that support the other.

We know that in the days, weeks, and months ahead we cannot forget. We cannot forget those that have gone before us and we cannot forget that our advocacy is interconnected. We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends who are mourning the untimely loss of their loved ones. We stand in solidarity with our community as we demand justice and seek healing. We vow to push towards a nation that is better than the one that George, Ahmaud, and Breonna departed from all too soon.

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