



Statement on Racism and State Violence – August 2020

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

– **President Barack Obama**

“You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right.”

– **Rosa Parks**

Racism, state violence, transphobia, white supremacy and colonialism are a clear and present danger to Black people across the United States – and to the Black people of Kentucky. Breonna Taylor lost her life on March 13, 2020 when 8 shots struck her from police that fired “wantonly and blindly¹” into her apartment during the execution of a no-knock search warrant in a drug investigation. David McAtee was shot and killed by a National Guardsman on June 1, 2020 while police were dispersing a crowd outside McAtee’s modest BBQ restaurant with pepper balls, for violation of curfew. And we cannot forget the young black men and boys like Michael Newby (19 years old) who was shot in the back 3 times by police on January 3, 2004 during a drug bust or the black student at Jeffersontown High School on November 21, 2017 who was tased, held down, and kicked by school police officers. Kentucky’s systems failed them.

In other states, systems failed Trayvon Martin (aged 17) on February 26, 2012 when he was shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, FL while walking alone after visiting a convenience store; and more recently, Ahmaud Arbery on February 23, 2020 when he was chased down and shot by armed white men while jogging in Brunswick, GA; Tony McDade, a Black trans man, who was killed by police on May 27, 2020 in Tallahassee, FL; Dreasjon Reed who was shot by police on May 6, 2020 in Indianapolis, IN.

George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 and a spark ignited what may well be the fourth wave of nationwide uprisings after the Red Summer of 1919, the protests and racial violence during the Depression and WWII, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.² Police denied a man, a Black man, the right to breathe. Twenty (20) times George told the officer whose knee was pressing into his neck, “I CAN’T BREATHE,” but he only had enough breath to say once, “Momma, I love you. Tell my kids I love them. I’m dead.”³

¹ *Termination Letter of Detective Brett Hankinson* – posted on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/LMPD/status/1275559612410888193/photo/1>.

² National Geographic, [*2020 is not 1968: To understand today’s protest, you must look further back*](#), June 11, 2020.

³ The Guardian, [*George Floyd told officers ‘I can’t breathe’ more than 20 times, transcripts show*](#), Maanvi Singh, July 9, 2020.

The horror and brutality of the murders of Breonna, David, Michael, Trayvon, Ahmaud, Tony, Dreajon and George, and hundreds of other Black men, women and children are front and center in our world today, but the oppression of Black and Indigenous people has been a stain on our nation since the moment white people set foot on the land including Kentucky.

A report by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights states, “*While African Americans remain the largest minority in Kentucky, they also remain the people with some of the greatest disadvantages in the socio-economic structure. They still linger in educational attainments; have inordinate and high poverty levels; face racial disparity in the criminal justice system; and are underrepresented in many elected and appointed positions. Our state and national communities need improvements in policies and practices in ways that will result in a more equal society in the areas of business and employment, education, housing, financial transactions, healthcare and help-related funding.*”⁴

A report by the [Lexington Fair Housing Council](#) indicates that continued practices of racism in housing, employment, and education have meant that the median white household wealth in the United States is more than 15 times larger than that of the median black household wealth and more than 13 times larger than that of the median Latino household.⁵

Children of color are more likely to experience the consequences of poverty, including negative effects on their educational experience and reduced success in adulthood. Moreover, their parents, who often struggle economically, are statistically least likely to be able to afford quality childcare and early education programs.⁶

The legacy of Black people in Kentucky is one of unfulfilled civil rights. The time has come to take a stand in solidarity; acknowledge our hand in ignoring the truth of our state’s systemic failure to protect Black people, Indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC)⁷; envision a Kentucky devoid of racial inequities; and publicly commit to change.

I. Who We Are

The Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCADV) is the statewide coalition whose membership includes all state-funded primary service domestic violence shelter programs. KCADV is grounded in the belief that domestic violence is a form of power-

⁴ Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, *The State of African Americans in Kentucky*, February 2009, page 5.

⁵ Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, & Thomas Shapiro, Institute for Assets & Social Policy, Brandeis University, *The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters*, June 21, 2016.

⁶ Child Welfare Information Gateway, [Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare](#), November 2016 and Johnson-Staub, Christine, [Equity Starts Early – Addressing Racial Inequities in Child Care and Early Education Policy](#), December 2017.

⁷ The term BIPOC is used to reflect many different groups of people of which Black people are one. It is used humbly and in deference to those who have created their own names. For the purposes of this statement, we have identified Black people as the focus. [Why the term “BIPOC” is so complicated, explained by linguists](#), Constance Grady, VOX June 30, 2020.

based violence and is part of a systematic pattern of oppression. Systems created by a combination of privilege, prejudice and institutional power enable and spread racial and cultural disparities, injustices, and violence. “Prevention practitioners in sexual and domestic violence are aware of the connection between racism and sexual and domestic violence. This includes the disproportionate rates of violence people of color experience, how the criminal justice system mass incarcerates and punishes more harshly people of color than white people, and how the movement to end sexual and domestic violence replicates oppression, power imbalances, and racism within mainstream and other organizations, to name a few connections.”⁸

KCADV holds that violence is not inherent to any culture, tradition, or group. It is a behavior learned through experience and observation and reinforced through personal, institutional, and societal responses.

Like all people, survivors of domestic violence have multiple identities, shaped and influenced by their ancestry, biology, life experiences, culture, family, community, historic institutions and systems, and social relations. Different combinations of these identities produce their own oppressions. For example, “*the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately.*”⁹ We cannot address domestic violence without addressing all other forms of intersectional oppression.

II. Our Understanding

Societal institutions, governmental agencies, the domestic violence movement, and other advocacy and service organizations and many of the individuals who direct or carry out their missions, in particular the white leadership among them, have failed the Black community. As part of these systems, we recognize and acknowledge that:

- We have not fully listened to Black feminist liberationists and other colleagues of color in the domestic violence movement who cautioned against the consequences of choosing increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to gender-based violence.
- We have often promoted ineffective solutions to reform systems that are designed to control people rather than real community-based solutions that support healing and liberation. For example, we have invested significantly in the criminal legal system, despite knowing that the vast majority of survivors choose not to engage with it, often because it is unsafe for them to do so, and that those who do are often re-traumatized by it.

⁸ Tori Vandelinde, [Understanding Racism and its Connection to Sexual and Domestic Violence](#), PreventConnect, July 15, 2019. Hyperlinks to WOCN Fact Sheet, The Sentencing Project, and Itzbeth Menjivar’s *The Social Justice Sector has an Internal Racism Problem*.

⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, [Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color](#), © 1993.

- We have not given serious consideration to transformative justice approaches to healing, accountability, and repair, approaches created by BIPOC leaders and used successfully in BIPOC communities.

As a Coalition built on the foundation of social justice, non-discrimination, and meaningful access, KCADV calls itself to account in this statement. Our staff, members, and Board of Directors are re-educating ourselves and re-aligning our efforts so that we are better positioned to fully promote racial equality and equity.

We understand that:

- We must acknowledge BIPOC’s historical trauma and lived experiences of violence and center those traumas and experiences in our commitments to move forward.
- BIPOC communities are not homogeneous and that opinions on what is necessary now vary in both substance and degree.
- We must be responsible for the ways in which our work directly contradicts our values. For example, we adopt and support nonviolence, self-determination, freedom for all people and the right to bodily autonomy as we simultaneously contribute to a pro-arrest and oppressive system that is designed to isolate, control, and punish. We promote the ideas of equity and freedom as we ignore and minimize the real risks faced by Black survivors who interact with a policing system that threatens the safety of their families and their very existence. We must recognize when this contradiction occurs and be able to justify our actions, or adopt another course when we cannot justify them.
- There are many advocates who have been leading the fight against entrenched racism and merciless crimes; however, as a Coalition, we must continue to embrace the message as a call to action across the entire Commonwealth while strengthening our unity to deliver and implement the message.
- [BlackLivesMatter](#). This statement stands alone and is not to be compared or contrasted with any other community of people. It does not devalue the lives of other people. Rather, it says that we have historically oppressed, injured, and traumatized Black people in this country and that we must finally recognize and admit this and make a change.

III. Our Vision

We envision a world where all human beings have inherent value, even when they cause harm; where people have what they need – adequate and nutritious food, safe and affordable housing, quality education and healthcare, meaningful work, and time with family and friends; and where all people are treated with cultural competence by acknowledging each and every person’s innocence, worthiness and competence in their own experiences.

A better world is within our reach. It is time to transform not only our oppressive institutions, but also ourselves. We are listening to BIPOC-led groups, organizations, and communities

including the spectrum of positions and policies that are presented. To that extent, we support the following:

1. End the War on Black Communities.¹⁰ *“Unless Americans can reconceptualize safety, taking away its racist connotations and recognizing that we are safer not with more guns and violence but with adequate food, clothing, housing, education, health care, jobs, and income for all, we are doomed to continue calling the police for rescue from every conceivable threat, real or imagined.”*¹¹
 - Invest in making communities stronger and safer through quality, affordable housing, living wage employment, public transportation, education, and health care that includes voluntary, harm reduction and patient-driven, community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment.
 - Invest in community-based transformative violence prevention and intervention strategies, that offer support for criminalized populations.
 - Provide publicly funded safety programs that are non-discriminatory, non-coercive, non-punitive, people-centered, trauma-informed, harm reduction-based, preventative, and transformative. Programs and services should be easily accessible to any member of a community, purely voluntary, and not mediated through or delivered in or through the criminal legal system, or through a social service program that is mandated to report to the criminal punishment system. Across the country, Black parents are more likely than white ones to be reported to child protective services and more likely than their white counterparts to have their children taken from them.¹²
 - Shift funding from surveillance, over-policing, mass criminalization, mass incarceration and deportation into community-based strategies.
 - Provide amends to survivors of police violence and their families, and to survivors of prison, detention and deportation violence, and their families. Provide restitution for wrongful convictions.
2. End Broken Windows Policing.¹³ Only 5% of all arrests made in America are for violent crimes. Meanwhile, the vast majority of arrests are for low level offenses that pose no threat to public safety. Police departments should de-prioritize enforcement of these issues. And cities should begin scaling up the role of mental health providers, substance abuse counselors and other community-based responses to these issues that are more effective and that do not risk exposing communities to police violence.
 - Decriminalize or de-prioritize enforcement of low-level offenses, including drug possession, public intoxication, loitering, jaywalking, disorderly conduct and

¹⁰ [End the War on Black Communities](#) – Unless specifically footnoted in this section, the positions listed are adapted from the Policy platform of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL).

¹¹ Mychal Denzel Smith, [Rough Justice – How America became over-policed](#), The New Republic, June 5, 2018.

¹² Shanta Trivedi, [Police feed the foster care-to-prison pipeline by reporting on Black parents](#), nbcnews/think/opinion/analysis/essays, July 29, 2020.

¹³ [End Broken Windows Policing](#) - Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

prostitution ([Tulsa teens handcuffed for jaywalking](#)) with corresponding funding provided for community-based alternatives.

- Establish enforceable bans on police racial profiling as well as bans on the use of consent searches, pretext stops and stop-and-frisk. (Examples of these policies include the NYC Racial Profiling ban, NYC Stop-and-Frisk reform, Rhode Island consent search ban).
 - Establish alternative responses to mental health crises and issues like homelessness and substance abuse, including by deploying first responder teams of mental health providers and community intervention workers to the scene to handle these issues instead of police officers. (Eugene Oregon "Cahoots" First Responder Program).
3. End For-Profit Policing. Police departments should not be allowed to profit from aggressively ticketing or issuing fines.¹⁴
 4. Prohibit warrantless surveillance and require police to report how they use surveillance tools.¹⁵
 5. Decriminalize most drug offenses and invest savings into programs and services including expungement for non-violent drug related offenses. The “War on Drugs” has had a disproportionate effect on Black people including higher rates of incarceration.¹⁶

Decriminalization would eliminate criminal penalties for:

- Drug use and possession.
- Possession of equipment used to introduce drugs into the human body, such as syringes.
- Low-level drug sales.

Benefits include:

- Saving money by reducing prison and especially jail costs and population size.
- Free up law enforcement resources to be used in more appropriate ways.
- Prioritize health and safety over punishment for people who use drugs.
- Reduce the stigma associated with drug use so that problematic drug users are encouraged to come out of the shadows and seek treatment and other support.
- Remove barriers to evidence-based harm reduction practices such as drug checking, heroin-assisted treatment and medical marijuana.¹⁷

KCADV is not stating that dismantling law enforcement or immediate radical reform to policing and other institutions are our objectives. In fact, we recognize that law enforcement can be helpful partners for shelter programs in certain roles. We also

¹⁴ Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

¹⁵ Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

¹⁶ NAACP, [Criminal Justice Fact Sheet](#).

¹⁷ The Drug Policy Alliance, [Drug Decriminalization](#).

recognize that statements about police brutality and violence are not meant to address individual officers in general, but rather to bring light to the *systemic dysfunction that has long plagued police departments and our criminal legal system*.¹⁸

Domestic violence was historically viewed as a private matter that should be addressed within the family. A great deal of effort went into criminalizing this type of violence in order to provide one form of relief for individual survivors and as an acknowledgement of how domestic violence negatively impacts entire communities. At this point in time we cannot support efforts that would move us back to a place where domestic violence is trivialized, dismissed or treated as anything less than unacceptable behavior which must be addressed by communities. We do not support any approach that attempts to provide restoration for the survivors of this type of violence without accountability of the person who committed the violence.

However, in recognition of the fact that, as with other crimes, marginalized communities have born a disproportionate burden of arrests and prosecutions for crimes of domestic violence, and at the same time have benefited the least from policing, we are committed to a paradigm shift in how domestic violence should be addressed as a community problem, one that cannot be policed away. When those experiencing violence do not feel safe in calling for police response, something has to change. There is a need to rethink how we respond to violence holistically and how we fund the police. There is a need to look at exchanging the funding of police to services which also uplift and support healthier communities and safer neighborhoods with perhaps fewer police and more societal supports of a different form and approach. This includes developing policies and practices that lessen and eventually eliminate the need for police in school, thereby dismantling the school to prison pipeline, and the use of court referrals as a means to ‘discipline’ children in schools. It must also include policies and funding for rehabilitation, remediation and recovery of those who use violence to solve problems, as well as addressing the underlying social inequities and privilege which promote and perpetuate this type of violence. Community accountability¹⁹ is one option that is gaining momentum and should be explored.

6. Establish policies governing the use of body cameras that ensure public access to footage, prevent storage of non-essential footage and provide for adequate protection of individual privacy, require officers to record while on-duty, include specific disciplinary consequences for violations, and prohibit the cameras from being used with biometric scanning and other surveillance technologies. (ACLU model body camera policy). Strengthen the right to film the police and provide legal assistance for individuals to sue law enforcement agencies if they take or destroy recording devices. (Colorado law)²⁰

¹⁸ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights letter to US House and Senate Leadership, June 1, 2020.

¹⁹ Incite! – [Resources for Organizing - Community Accountability](#).

²⁰ Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

7. Require independent investigations and prosecutions of police officers.²¹ *Ninety-nine (99%) of killings by police from 2013 – 2019 have not resulted in officers being charged with a crime.*²² While the federal government has the power to step in and investigate officers and their departments, they lack the resources to do this at the scale needed to change policing outcomes in America. When police are sued for misconduct, they should have to bear the burden of paying all financial costs associated with their actions.²³
8. Economic Justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access including supporting initiatives and activities that seek to reduce the Wealth Gap among Black families.²⁴
9. Community Control where those most impacted in our communities control the laws, institutions, and policies that are meant to serve them including:
 - Direct democratic community control of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, ensuring that communities most harmed by destructive policing have the power to hire and fire officers, determine disciplinary action, control budgets and policies, and subpoena relevant agency information.
 - An end to the privatization of education and real community control by parents, students and community members of schools including democratic school boards and community control of curriculum, hiring, firing and discipline policies. Participatory budgeting at the local, state and federal level.²⁵
10. Political Power and Black self-determination in all areas of society where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power including:
 - Election protection
 - Electoral expansion
 - The right to vote for all people including full access, guarantees, and protections of the right to vote for all people through universal voter registration, automatic voter registration, same day voter registration, voting day holidays, Online Voter Registration (OVR), enfranchisement of formerly and presently incarcerated people, local and state resident voting for undocumented people, and a ban on any disenfranchisement laws.²⁶
11. Federal and state statutory reforms on use of force, police accountability, racial profiling, militarization, data collection and training. *“Police have shot and killed more than 1,000 people in the United States over the past year. Moreover, Black*

²¹ Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

²² [Mapping Police Violence.org](https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/).

²³ [End For-Profit Policing](#) – Part of Campaign Zero Policy Platform.

²⁴ Hanks, Solomon and Weller, [Systemic Inequality: How America’s Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap](#), February 21, 2018.

²⁵ [Community Control](#) - Part of the Policy Platform of M4BL.

²⁶ [Political Power](#) - Part of the Policy Platform of M4BL.

people are disproportionately more likely than white people to be killed by police. For too long, the cycle of police brutality and racism has been met with cosmetic tinkering instead of substantive structural change.”²⁷

- Require a federal standard that use of force be reserved for only when **necessary** as a last resort after exhausting reasonable options, and incentivize states through federal funding mechanisms to implement this standard; require the use of de-escalation techniques, and the duty to intervene; ban the use of force as a punitive measure or means of retaliation against individuals who only verbally confront officers, or against individuals who pose a danger only to themselves; and require all officers to accurately report all uses of force.
- Prohibit all maneuvers that restrict the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain, including neck holds, chokeholds, and similar excessive force, deeming the use of such force a federal civil rights violation.
- Prohibit racial profiling and require robust data collection on police-community encounters and law enforcement activities. Data should capture all demographic categories and be disaggregated.
- Eliminate federal programs that provide military equipment to law enforcement.
- Prohibit the use of no-knock warrants, especially for drug searches.
- Change the 18 U.S.C. Sec. 242 mens rea requirement from willfulness to recklessness, permitting prosecutors to successfully hold law enforcement accountable for the deprivation of civil rights and civil liberties.
- Develop a national public database that would cover all police agencies in the United States and its territories, similar to the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training’s National Decertification Index,¹² which would compile the names of officers who have had their licenses revoked due to misconduct, including but not limited to domestic violence, sexual violence, assault and harassment, criminal offense against minors, excessive use of force, violation of 18 U.S.C. § 242; perjury, falsifying a police report or planting and destroying evidence, and deadly physical assault; as well as terminations and complaints against the officers.
- End the qualified immunity doctrine which prevents police from being held legally accountable when they break the law. Qualified immunity, a defense that shields officials from being sued, has been interpreted by courts so broadly that it allows officers to engage in unconstitutional acts with impunity.

²⁷ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights letter to US House and Senate Leadership, June 1, 2020.

IV. Our Commitment

KCADV and its members commit to providing safe and affirming care to survivors. We recognize that survivors have diverse and varied needs and they come to us a whole people with multiple and simultaneous identities. We commit to adhering to our responsibilities of non-discrimination as an act of solidarity in both intention and practice. KCADV and its members will work to identify and eliminate discrimination in all aspects of our work (service provision, hiring, systems change advocacy and operation). We commit to providing trauma informed care, the presumptions of cultural competency, and meaningful access for survivors.

Trauma Informed Care

- The five guiding principles of trauma informed practice are: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.
- Includes believing survivors when they share stories of violence against them, including their experiences with racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, and all forms of discrimination.
- Practice in such a way that treats historical trauma as serious and valid.
- Survivor-centered programs, which allow for survivors to identify their needs and priorities.
- Providing safe and affirming care for survivors.

Cultural Competency

As KCADV practices it, cultural competency requires that all survivors be provided the presumption of innocence, worthiness, and competence.

- The presumption of innocence provides that neither survivors nor their identities are at fault for violence or harm perpetrated against them.
- The presumption of worthiness provides that survivors are inherently worthy of time, resources, and the investment of program staff.
- The presumption of competence provides that survivors are fully capable of making decisions for themselves and are the experts in their own lives.

Meaningful Access

Meaningful access is an organizational commitment to providing non-discriminatory services. It requires that institutions allocate staff time and energy as well as resources. The systems that survivors interact with in order to receive support often create and maintain barriers for those survivors in receiving the care they need. Meaningful Access is designed to reduce those barriers.

Components of Meaningful Access are the following:

1. Provide NOTICE of the availability of (non-discrimination) services through our social media, traditional media, signage, outreach, and presence on diverse working groups, including supporting initiatives, statements, policies, and advocacy on intersecting issues. Notice will be provided in languages culturally relevant to service district.

2. Invest in the ongoing and regular TRAINING of staff to understand policies, practices, and theories that guide and inform non-discriminatory operations and the organizational definition of “discrimination” and engaging in ongoing and regular MONITORING processes so as to be able to identify and correct incidents of discrimination. Training can include but is not limited to understanding: racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, transphobia, ethnocentrism, colonialism, religious imperialism, Meaningful Access, implicit biases, and the harm these can cause in the provision of services. Monitoring can include, but is not limited to self-assessments to identify discriminatory practices, engaging in (statewide) needs assessment activities, reviewing survey information including those from community partners, programmatic and financial evaluations as part of funder requirements, and participating in the Standards Review Process (which may include on site monitoring activities).
3. Creating and adopting POLICIES and PROCEDURES that detail the organizational commitment to ensuring non-discrimination in business and service delivery practices and provide leadership to prepare staff to comply with agency policy through regular and frequent training. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Plan for ensuring non-discrimination in hiring, compensating, and promoting staff.
 - Emergency medication.
 - Language accessibility.
 - Non-cooperation with Immigration services.
 - Serving male survivors in shelter.
 - Serving transgender survivors in shelter.
 - Serving survivors with a disability.
 - Serving survivors who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Supporting external POLICIES that are explicitly non-discriminatory from community partners and from federal, state and local government.

- Submitting comments to rules published in the Federal Register.
 - Drafting letters recommending non-discriminatory policy solutions.
 - Signing letters of support from partner agencies that include any of the positions or policies in this statement and that are not in conflict with our mission, vision or principles.
 - Working with state agencies on mandatory reporting policies.
4. Investing in SKILLED STAFF that are equipped to undertake the activities of the organization with a strong understanding of what discrimination is and how to combat it, and who are expected and empowered to follow agency commitments and policy to non-discrimination. This process can include an agency onboarding and training plan that outlines the needs of communities and trauma informed responses to community trauma.

5. Developing accessible PRODUCTS and making them available to survivors including:
 - written documents, websites, posters, videos, and brochures that feature diverse communities (representation in brochures, posts, signage, etc.).
 - important information about rules, regulations, benefits, grievances, or any information relevant to the participation in a program will be made available to survivors.

6. Engage in SYSTEMS CHANGE advocacy with a commitment to promoting the rights of all survivors regardless of identity and the communities from which they come without compromise and recognizing the vital importance of centering the needs of traditionally marginalized people and keeping those needs in focus when engaging in legislative, regulatory and executive agency policy advocacy.

This statement is meant to be a fluid document; KCADV intends to update, modify, and increase its commitments as we learn and grow. We know we won't always get it "right," but we intend to keep working until we do.

On behalf of the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence,



Angela H. Yannelli, CEO