



June 23, 2020

To Mayor Rhodes-Conway and members of the Common Council,

MPSEA is issuing this statement in response to the recent instances of police brutality that have seized the national conscience. It is clear that these tragedies, just the latest in an unknowably long list, are inextricably tied to the racial injustice and inequity that underpins our nation's past and continues to subvert our community today.

Let us be equally clear: MPSEA's Board and members find this injustice outrageous and unacceptable. Understand that, as employees of the City of Madison, we do not wish to work within a system that perpetuates injustice and institutionalized racism. Yet we recognize that it is part of the structures that provide us a living and embedded in the very air we breathe. We are part of these systems and we are complicit. So we must speak up and leverage our collective voice to express our concern and outrage and implore the Mayor and the Council to use their power to take real and courageous stands against inequities and racism.

Our current fractured climate comes from knowing this is not a mere moment for our community and nation. Structures of power, unrecognized deep-rooted histories of oppression, prejudice, and areas of bias and hate, directly and personally affect the lives of hundreds of people in this city every minute of every hour. As evidenced in many of the recent reports we have seen, the City of Madison is one of the worst places in the nation for Black people. Black people continue to live in fear for themselves, their children and their communities, in fear of the very systems and structures that are supposed to be in place to ensure safety and justice.

Our anger comes from knowing that we, as a community and a society, have been here before, and in fact have never left. We are still fighting for rights that should be innate to all Americans. We know that so many in our community keep asking how many times these conversations will repeat before there is real change. We know that the pandemic that does not allow us to be together worsens these conditions. The legacy and continuing impact of injustice for black people is visible in areas with which the City concerns itself daily – access to housing, transportation, internet access, protection of civil rights, and countless additional services. Justice demands solutions that are equally systemic. We offer the following recommendations that could start Madison on a path to lasting community change.

1. City of Madison elected officials work with the Police & Fire Commission to:
 - a. Update the Commission's discipline guidelines and ensure that they are enforced in such a way as to hold the Police Department to the highest accountability for officers who commit violent acts or serve as passive bystanders during acts of police-perpetuated violence.
 - b. Set up procedures and systems (such as mediation) for residents to report police abuse so accountability can be brought to the scene of police brutality. If someone in authority were called within a three-minute timeframe, George Floyd would still be breathing today.
 - c. Open discussions on other reforms related to police brutality, including abuse of authority and the maintenance of officers on the force with a track record of abuse. Create trainings to require officers to volunteer, work in and learn from many of our diverse communities, to help remove their fears and perceived bias.
 - d. Remove police officers from schools while advocating for alternatives such as providing schools with an appropriate complement of social workers, mental health specialists, and other related professionals trained in addressing/assisting children affected by trauma or any other adverse event.
2. City elected officials take a strong stance against expanding the county jail and advocate for the use of alternatives to jail and prison, including fines, restitution, community service, probation, house arrest, and government-sponsored work training programs.
3. The City of Madison hires RESJI Coordinators supported by the Mayor's office, as soon as possible, to help begin the work of healing and constructive activism among city employees and our outward facing work in the community.
4. The City develops and promotes intentional learning and support meetings/environments for employees to develop their anti-racist practice
5. The City sponsors spaces for people of color to heal and find affinity.
6. The City provides venues for employees to voice their concern and their constructive ideas related to city policy.
7. The City designates Juneteenth as a Citywide holiday.
8. The City designates National Election Day as a Citywide holiday.
9. The City Council regularly reviews racial disparities in hiring and promotion.

We are a community that does not condone any acts of racism, discrimination or violence. This cannot be accepted as normal. MPSEA stands with our community, and we will continue to demand equity and justice for all people, inclusive of all identities.

The MPSEA Board

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