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Statement by Manne Favor, Executive Director, JFON Houston regarding the murder of George Floyd

I CAN'T BREATHE!

Those three words have become resounding chants in cities across the country, today. But sadly, it is not the first time we are having to hear protesters chant those words. This time the cynosure of the protests is George Floyd, an unarmed African American man killed by police.

Lying under the knees of three Minneapolis police officers, I can't breathe were his cry for air, while one of the officers pressed his knee on his neck, snuffing life out his body.

I can't breathe has become a desperate cry for help from many in our country, asphyxiated by the cruelty of injustice, racism and police brutality.

Our hearts are broken as we watch injustice live on and in some instances expand its reach and influence in this country. Regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or nationality, everyone standing on United States soil should feel safe and know they will be respected and their constitutional rights upheld.

Sadly, that is not the case. The long list of unarmed African Americans killed by police is a testament to this. Although half of the people shot and killed by police are white, black Americans are shot at a disproportionate rate. Black Americans account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, but are killed by police at more than twice the rate of white Americans. And Hispanic Americans are also killed by police at a disproportionate rate.

To anyone who is paying attention, the facts are not in dispute. The question however is how long will we put up with those facts? How long will we have to chant, I can't breathe, on the streets? How many more protests will it take for us to recognize that something is fundamental broken in this country?

I stand with those who are demanding justice, knowing that justice for all is the only way our nation will find peace. Because if one of us can't breathe, then all of us can't breathe.

I stand for justice for all and will continue to do so for the rest of my life. Although I am encouraged by the arrest of the remaining three officers in the case of the death of Mr. Floyd, it is regrettable that it took several days of protests to see it happen. With these arrests, I am hopeful that the long journey to justice has begun and that ultimately, justice will be served for Mr. Floyd and his grieving family.

I am heartened that the cries of I can't breathe from around the world is being heard in the corridors of power and seats of government from Minnesota to Washington, DC.

I firmly stand with peaceful protesters and strongly condemn rioting and the destruction of life and property.

The chants must continue because...

I can't breathe is now a clarion call from we the people, to end racism in America.

I can't breathe is our resounding plea for reform in policing and police departments across the country.

I can't breathe is the desperate scream of the future demanding immediate change in the present.

I can't breathe is the tune of a new generation rejecting the warped thinking of white supremacy and inequality.

I can't breathe is the loud invocation of the words of Thomas Jefferson, "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

I can't breathe is the distress call from a people wearied by oppression and injustice, to those who are unaffected, who silently stand by.

I can't breathe is the vigorous plea for broad and deep reforms in the criminal justice and judiciary systems of this country.

I can't breathe is the echo that will eventually bring down the edifice and walls of systemic racism rooted in our public institutions for far too long.

I call on all Americans to treat everyone with the love and respect that they would want given to their mother, their father, their brother, sister, son or daughter. I stand with those who peacefully march against injustice and remind everyone that two wrongs do not make a right. I am confident that peaceful protests, calls to legislators demanding change and going to the polls to vote, are the ways that we the people exercise power. Anything outside of these will do nothing but allow political pundits to change the conversation and continue to vilify those who don't look like them, talk like them or agree with them.

I stand with anyone who is working to bring about justice and peace to all people. Rise up and let your voice be heard. Silence is compliance.