



## LAVENDER SENIORS STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH "BLACK LIVES MATTER" AND "STOP KILLING BLACK PEOPLE"

It shouldn't have taken 401 years for America – land of opportunity, dedicated to the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness for all its citizens – to live up to the creed enshrined in the second paragraph of our nation's Declaration of Independence in 1776 that "all men are created equal." We have an opportunity to self-correct now via various current protest movements, including "Black Lives Matter" and "Stop Killing Black People," which we support.

Therefore, at this crucial inflection point, we anchor our support for immediate action to correct racial injustice on the following:

**GIVEN** there are inherent flaws in even that statement ("all men are created equal"), all such corrective action should include the stipulation that all human beings – men, women and children – are created equal.

**GIVEN** that 41 of the 56 white men who signed that precious, revolutionary and inspirational document were themselves the proud "owners" of entire families of black human beings. It is noted that no women or People of Color were signatories to the original document.

**GIVEN** that – for at least three centuries – countless members of these enslaved families were routinely, legally separated from each other at the whim or financial benefit of their "masters'.

**GIVEN** that all members of these families were consistently denied access to services necessary to their health, education and welfare – presumed "rights" of all members of white families – still denied People of Color to this day in some places.

**GIVEN** that at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, part of the nation's earliest shame came in the form of the "Three-Fifths Compromise" – as a concession to the Southern states – which resulted in slaves being considered only 3/5ths of a person, counting only three of every five slaves as actual human beings – American citizens – in the Constitutionally-mandated decennial census and for various other official purposes.

**GIVEN** that – in spite of a 1792 ruling that no blacks be enlisted in the U.S. Army (only in effect until 1862, due to manpower shortages) and a 1798 ruling by the Secretary of War that "No Negro, Mulatto or Indian may be enlisted" in the U.S. Marine Corps (a practice only ended in 1942), an estimated 9,000 black men officially fought in the Revolutionary War forces and many more as Buffalo Soldiers in various regiments and infantry battalions during various wars between 1863 and the early 20th century (including the "Indian" and "Spanish-American" Wars).

**GIVEN** that many U.S. slaves – freed by the 1st January, 1863, Emancipation Proclamation – didn't know they could no longer be "owned" until nearly 2.5 years afterward. The news only reached Texas on 19th June 1865 ("Juneteenth" Day) – and many were not freed or changed to paid "employees" for considerable time; some were never freed in their lifetimes.

**GIVEN** that the fortunes of many aristocratic families and corporations of the 21st century were initially built on the backs of unpaid slaves of the previous 3+ centuries.

**GIVEN** the White House, the Statue of Freedom atop the U.S. Capitol Building, and numerous other government buildings/monuments in D.C. were built largely with black slave labor, much of the wages for that work going to the slave owners.

**GIVEN** that it took passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1870 before black **men** were finally given the right to vote (voter suppression, gerrymandering, voter ID requirements, etc., still minimize that right in many states and locales).

**GIVEN** that approximately 200,000 African-American soldiers and sailors served in the Union Army and Navy forces during the Civil War (the U.S. Colored Troops), resulting in the death of at least 40,000 black soldiers and sailors. Unfortunately, those who lived and returned home encountered continued threats to their lives, livelihoods and families.

**GIVEN** that 350,000 African-Americans served in World War I (still-segregated units like the intrepid "Harlem Hellfighters" and the "Black Devils"), returning afterward to Jim Crow laws, segregation and the glorification of the Confederacy (thus, glorifying slavery) through erection of statues and monuments over the next six decades, continuing until at least 1978.\*

**GIVEN** that at least a dozen black veterans were lynched – and countless others threatened with lynching – in Southern states within a year after the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 Armistice and their return from combat – usually for "insulting or attempting to assault" a white woman. Even those returning veterans not actually lynched or threatened with lynching continued to be victims of assault and discrimination, including white-instigated race riots in such places as Chicago (1919) and various other parts of the country.

**GIVEN** that the National Memorial for Peace & Justice and its Legacy Museum – constructed in Montgomery, AL, in 2018 – has documented 4,400+ lynchings of black men, women and children between 1877 and 1950, with many recent police-related deaths being described as modern-day lynchings, as well.

**GIVEN** that more than one million black men and women served in World War II (e.g., the well-known "Tuskegee Airmen") and – in spite of serving with distinction – a disproportionate number of African-American veterans were given "blue discharges." This meant that they didn't qualify for many jobs, education/benefits via the G.I. Bill, various housing-purchase plans, all of which essentially denied them important access points to achieving the "American Dream".

**GIVEN** that the military was only desegregated by President Truman in 1948 (too late for some black veterans who were previously denied "regular" benefits after discharge), racism in the military only began being dealt with 85 years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

**GIVEN** that "human zoos" – made up primarily of dehumanized black, Asian and Pacific Islander people – were on display well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., a black man on display at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair was such a money-maker that he was moved to the Bronx Zoo and put on display, caged with the monkeys and apes, a most-widely-attended attraction for years. After his release from captivity, not surprisingly, he killed himself in 1916.)\*\*

**GIVEN** that – even in the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment of 1920 – it was white women who were granted suffrage. Only with passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 were African-American, Asian-American, Native American and Latinx women officially and finally granted the right to vote (if they can successfully run the gauntlet of current voter suppression, voter ID demands and gerrymandering that still exists in many places).

**GIVEN** that a 2013 Supreme Court Decision (Shelby County, Alabama, vs Holder) gutted many key components of the Voting Rights Act, allowing a dozen Southern states and countless local jurisdictions throughout the country to have free rein in re-instituting voter suppression.

**GIVEN** that state and local “Jim Crow” laws requiring racial segregation in education, housing, employment, public accommodations, etc. (frequently not even pretending to be “separate but equal”) were legally being enforced until 1965.

**GIVEN** that – even though the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education decision required integration of schools – the last officially segregated school district (Cleveland, Mississippi) was finally integrated by judicial order in May of **2016**. The first federally-enforced high school integration occurred at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957.

**GIVEN** that explicit federal intervention had to be invoked in integration cases (e.g., University of Alabama: George Wallace vowed to “stand in the schoolhouse door” to block desegregation attempts in 1963), de facto segregation exists in some public and private schools, colleges and universities to this day, only some even pretending to offer “separate but equal” facilities.

**GIVEN** that the long-overdue Civil Rights Act of 1957 had to be supplemented by the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (in the heat of post-Martin-Luther-King-assassination riots), to deal with Hate Crimes (LGBTQ finally included 41 years later in a 2009 bill), to confront specific inequities faced by Native Americans, Blacks and other People of Color in Fair Housing, Employment and Accommodations.

**GIVEN** that Historically Black Colleges and Universities have existed from at least 1837, this group of educational institutions was only designated as such by the U.S. Department of Education in 1965. These HBCUs – currently 102 of them – continue to struggle to receive a proportionate share of federal higher education funding.

**GIVEN** that the LGBTQ+ community itself has a shameful history of racial discrimination (e.g., use of pejorative terms like “dinge queens”, requiring People of Color to have three forms of identification to enter LGBTQ bars, and perpetuating racist stereotypes, among many other subtle and not-so-subtle forms of discrimination).

**GIVEN** that a disproportionate number of American cases/deaths from HIV/AIDS have involved African-Americans (though 12-13% of the population, black men/women/children are currently 42% of new HIV-positive cases – historically, 43% of the deaths in the epidemic); in the 2020 COVID-19 epidemic, so far, African-American mortality is 2.2 times higher than white or Asian, 2.1 times higher than Latinx and 1.9 times higher than Native Americans. Much of this disparity can be attributed to poverty, unequal access to affordable housing, health care services and education, among other results of generations of systemic racism.

**GIVEN** that hate crimes documented since 1969 consistently indicate that biases associated with race, religion, sexuality and gender identity remain the motivation for the majority of the violence (LGBTQ+ as hate-list targets only formally documented since being added in 2009).

**GIVEN** that police are consistently responsible for close to 1,000 shooting deaths per year (994 in 2015; 962 in 2016; 986 in 2017; 991 in 2018; 1,004 in 2019; and 463 as of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020), including a disproportionate number of black and brown people (e.g., blacks only make up 12-13% of the population, but 24% of the people killed by police).\*\*\*

**GIVEN** that police brutality has gone unbridled, particularly against blacks and other People of Color – (a 2019 article published by the National Academy of Sciences estimates that black men are 2.5 times as likely to be killed by police as white men; a 2018 CDC study indicates an even higher disproportion of 2.8) – politicians have consistently resisted having such incidents documented in any central location.

**GIVEN** that racial violence against black people – despite regular protests in the streets – has continued unabated on American soil for the last 401 years; and that white nationalist vigilantes and white supremacist organizations are on the rise in the country (including at the highest levels of government).

**GIVEN** that the American Medical Association and the Human Rights Campaign – among others – have gone on record calling the murder of transgender individuals to be an epidemic – particularly among transwomen of color. At least 28 (mostly black transwomen) were killed in 2019 and at least 15 (also mostly black transwomen) have been killed in the first five months of 2020. Several of the police murders of transgenders have been misgendered in initial reports.

**GIVEN** that horrific and unnecessary police-related deaths over the decades have involved far too many unarmed black citizens, include at least the following so far in 2020 alone: George Floyd's death after eight minutes and forty-six seconds of a police knee on his neck and four knees in his back as he lay handcuffed in Minneapolis, MN; Breonna Taylor killed in her own bed by eight police bullets after a "no-knock" warrant was erroneously and violently served on her apartment in Louisville, KY; Rashard Brooks killed by two police bullets in his back in Atlanta, GA; and death of Ahmaud Arbery by three gunshot wounds inflicted in a struggle between Arbery and a former police officer and his son in Brunswick, GA.

**GIVEN** this shameful and disgraceful history of racial injustice in our country, anyone who denies the centuries of systemic, institutionalized racism throughout the land is beyond delusional. Something concrete must be done immediately – by the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of our tricameral government; by the Governors and Legislatures of every State, Commonwealth, District and Territory of the U.S.; by every County Board of Supervisors, City and Township Council in the Union to insure that this pattern and practice of systemic and institutionalized racism cease immediately.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Lavender Seniors of the East Bay, a non-profit organization serving LGBTQ seniors in the San Francisco East Bay Counties of Alameda and Contra Costa, unequivocally joins the chorus of protestors in the "Black Lives Matter" and "Stop Killing Black People" movements around the country, with the firm belief that none of us can be equal, free and safe until all of us are equal, free and safe.

*\* [Editor's note: On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020, a Tennessee Legislature committee voted 11-5 to KEEP the bust of a Confederate soldier and KKK leader – only installed in **1978** – up in the Tennessee Capitol Building.]*

*\*\* [Editor's note: For more on this practice of "human zoos" - here and abroad – see this 2019 production: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY6ZroI5QEK>]*

*\*\*\* [Editor's note: Part of the reason some sister organizations (e.g., San Francisco AIDS Foundation and American Civil Liberties Union) adopted the motto: "Stop Killing Black People!" see videos: [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=stop%20killing%20black%20people&epa=SEARCH\\_BOX&redirect=false](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=stop%20killing%20black%20people&epa=SEARCH_BOX&redirect=false)]*