

Moment of Truth

June 2020

This is a moment of reckoning. The murder of George Floyd broke the collective heart of this country, and now, finally, millions of people are saying their names: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery - an endless list of Black Lives stolen at the hands and knees of police. The legacies of slavery and unfulfilled civil rights, colonialism and erasure, hatred and violence, have always been in full view. Turning away is no longer an option. Superficial reform is not enough.

We, the undersigned sexual assault and domestic violence state coalitions call ourselves to account for the ways in which this movement, and particularly the white leadership within this movement, has repeatedly failed Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) survivors, leaders, organizations, and movements:

- We have failed to listen to Black feminist liberationists and other colleagues of color in the movement who cautioned us against the consequences of choosing increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to gender-based violence.
- We have promoted false solutions of reforming systems that are designed to control people, rather than real community-based solutions that support healing and liberation.
- We have invested significantly in the criminal legal system, despite knowing that the vast majority of survivors choose not to engage with it and that those who do are often re-traumatized by it.
- We have held up calls for “victim safety” to justify imprisonment and ignored the fact that prisons hold some of the densest per-capita populations of trauma survivors in the world.
- We have ignored and dismissed transformative justice approaches to healing, accountability, and repair, approaches created by BIPOC leaders and used successfully in BIPOC communities.

We acknowledge BIPOC’s historical trauma and lived experiences of violence and center those traumas and experiences in our commitments to move forward. We affirm that BIPOC communities are not homogeneous and that opinions on what is necessary now vary in both substance and degree. We stand with the Black Women leaders in our movement, for whom isolation, risk, and hardship are now particularly acute. And we are grateful to the Black Women, Indigenous Women, and Women of Color - past and present - who have contributed mightily to our collective body of work, even as it has compromised their own health and well-being.

This moment has long been coming. We must be responsible for the ways in which our movement work directly contradicts our values. We espouse 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 BIPOC survivors who interact with a policing system that threatens the safety of their families and their very existence. We seek to uproot the core drivers of gender-based violence yet treat colonialism, white supremacy, racism, and transphobia as disconnected or separate from our core work.

A better world is within reach. It is being remembered and imagined in BIPOC communities around the world, and it is calling us to be a part of it. In this world:

- all human beings have inherent value, even when they cause harm;
- people have what they need - adequate and nutritious food, housing, quality education and healthcare, meaningful work, and time with family and friends; and
- all sentient beings are connected, including Mother Earth.

It is time to transform not only oppressive institutions, but also ourselves. Divestment and reallocation must be accompanied by rigorous commitment to and participation in the community solutions and supports that are being recommended by multiple organizations and platforms.

We are listening to and centering BIPOC-led groups, organizations, and communities. We join their vision of liberation and support the following:

- **Reframe the idea of “public safety”** - to promote and utilize emerging community-based practices that resist abuse and oppression and encourage safety, support, and accountability
- **Remove police from schools** - and support educational environments that are safe, equitable, and productive for all students
- **Decriminalize survival** - and address mandatory arrest, failure to protect, bail (fines and fees), and the criminalization of homelessness and street economies (sex work, drug trades, etc.)
- **Provide safe housing for everyone** - to increase affordable, quality housing, particularly for adult and youth survivors of violence, and in disenfranchised communities
- **Invest in care, not cops** - to shift the work, resourcing, and responsibility of care into local communities

The undersigned coalitions agree that the above actions are both aspirational and essential. While timing and strategy may differ across communities, states, and sovereign nations, we commit to supporting and partnering with BIPOC leaders and organizations. We commit to standing in solidarity with sovereignty, land and water protection, and human rights. And we say resoundingly and unequivocally: BLACK LIVES MATTER!

The Coronavirus pandemic, unchecked and increased police violence, political and economic upheaval, and stay-at-home isolation have produced the “perfect storm.” We have a choice to make: run from the storm or into it. We choose to run into it and through it. We choose to come out the other side better, whole, loving, just, and more human.

We have spent decades building our movement’s voice and power. How we use them now will define us in the years ahead. Let our actions show that we did not stand idly by. Let them show that we learned, changed, and will continue to demonstrate that Black Lives Matter is a centering practice for our work.

Affirmed by:

Alabama Coalition Against Rape
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault
California Coalition Against Sexual Assault
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
CAWS North Dakota
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Jane Doe Inc. (Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence)
Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.
Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence
Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault
New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence
New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Inc.
New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Violence Free Colorado
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault