

Eradicate Racism:

More Than a Hashtag

History



Throughout American history, a single epoch-defining event often has helped to significantly influence the laws of the land, moral compass of the people, and social direction of the nation. For example, in 1963, Birmingham, Alabama Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene Bull Connor ordered policemen to use police dogs to viciously attack peaceful civil rights protestors that included Black women and children. Firemen turned high-pressure water hoses on the crowd knocking them off their feet and ripping skin from their bodies.

Non-racist White Americans, including those ambivalent about the legitimacy of the civil rights movement, were horrified prompting many of them, for the first time, to find various means to support the Civil Rights Movement. After seeing scenes of extreme brutality on national television networks and magazines, White America's moral pendulum started to swing towards justice for Black people.

In 1967, often referred to as "the Long Hot Summer," over 150 urban uprisings erupted across the United States as a result of police brutality, gross social and economic inequalities, unbridled acts of domestic terror by White supremacists and the seeming lack of resolve on the part of the federal government to correct the problems. Then President Lyndon

Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission, to try to understand the reasons for the underlining causes of civil unrest. The report found that "poverty and institutional racism" were driving factors for inner-city violence. "White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it... Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white- separate and unequal. Reaction to last summer's disorders (implementation of dangerous police practices) has quickened the movement and deepened the division."

To the detriment and peril of the nation, the Kerner Commission Report was largely rejected, setting the stage for ongoing tragedies like the police murder of George Floyd and the brutalization and execution with impunity of countless numbers of Black people by rogue police officers and other white racists vigilantes

Current Situation



The sight of George Floyd, a 46-year old African American man dubbed "The Gentle Giant" by his family and friends, face down on the street with a White Minneapolis policeman's knee on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds galvanized unprecedented numbers of protestors worldwide. Mr.

Floyd could be heard calling for his mother, who had been deceased for two years, while pleading with the cop to get off his neck because, "I can't breathe." Mr. Floyd's death was caused by the depraved indifference and callous disregard for Black life of a killer cop with multiple disciplinary infractions and allegations of discrimination on his record. Three other cops ignored the pleas of Mr. Floyd and bystanders to stop get off his neck and allow him to breathe.

As of this writing, multi-racial, multi-faith demonstrations are continuing to take place in all 50 states, untold numbers of US cities and villages, and at least a dozen nations worldwide. Mr. Floyd's public murder may be a seminal moment in America's racial history, the kind of potentially transformative event that signals the beginning of a serious attempt to address and start the process of dismantling structural racism and all of its hideous manifestations throughout society.

Action Items



The following recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive, but suggestions to help us along this path of social justice:

- Educate yourself on the social history of this country. Take advantage of lists of books, documentaries, podcasts, webinars, etc. recommended by ICNA Council for Social Justice and other groups and individuals.
- Familiarize yourself with Muslim and non-Muslim groups in your area who are working on long-term solutions to issues of inequality, wealth disparities, structural racism, police brutality, Prison Industrial Complex, judicial and education reform. Join the work of others and create such operations among Muslims if none exist.
- Develop a list of items that all political candidates must agree to prior to receiving your endorsement and support. This should apply to both Muslim and non-Muslim candidates.
- Participate in organized, not spontaneous, demonstrations by groups that you have some familiarity with the organizers. Wear face masks at all times and try to maintain social distancing to the best of your ability.
- Organize demonstrations that include non-Muslim speakers who are active in social justice issues. African American speakers should be highlighted. Provide bottles of water for the demonstrators and have Muslim marshals for the event.
- Advocate for the establishment of civilian oversight over local police. This is not a new concept and we should learn from efforts of past Civilian Review Boards of local departments. Insist that Civilian Review Boards have independent investigative capacity, access to internal departmental findings, free and independent voice to publicly address charges of discrimination, abuse, brutality, etc.
- Demand the demilitarization of police departments.
- Demand police community patrols in high volume intervention areas composed of local officers who are familiar with the populations they are patrolling.
- Demand that police budgets reflect a proportionate share of the city's overall allocation in line with actual requirements and not bloated or taken away from social services, education, etc.
- Demand police officers with proven charges of discrimination be reassigned to non-direct police assignments.
- Demand that police officer candidates who have memberships in white supremacist groups be automatically disqualified for jobs in the police department and that officers identified with such memberships be reassigned to non-policing duties or be fired. Those who are reassigned must take racial sensitivity sessions conducted under the auspices of the police department but conducted by qualified outside instructors.
- Demand that all members of the police department take Culture Sensitivity Classes.