



Racism and its evils are deeply embedded in America's core. Racial subjugation and violence were the essential source of nourishment upon which this country was founded and that has maintained systemic oppression and racial inequities that persist today. White Americans fed themselves lies about their racial superiority in order to justify their terroristic violence against indigenous and Black people. As a result, the government, institutions, and businesses nourished by those lies have become infested with a parasitic disease. The parasite will not live without the host and the host cannot imagine life without its parasite.

The destruction caused by racism is simultaneously obvious and insidious. Insidious in the quiet thoughts and discrete actions of institutional decision makers who view Black and other marginalized people as less than qualified, trouble makers, or "just not a good fit." Insidious in the policies and practices of institutions that reflect explicit and implicit bias at all levels.

And its destruction has been blatantly obvious through government-sanctioned violence exacted upon Black people. This is only possible because of systemic oppression (fed by the parasite) infecting our institutions since the beginning of the country. Racism left a lasting impact with redlining in the mid-1900s that created poor urban neighborhoods of color as the government subsidized the development of white suburbs, the greatest wealth-building strategy in the history of the US. Not only did government policies exclude Blacks, it tore down their homes and replaced them with public housing, forcing a life of dependency. Redlining took on new forms in the 2000s with predatory lending disproportionately wiped out hard-fought home ownership for thousands of families of color. Inequitable school funding, diversion of tax dollars to charter, private and parochial schools and the digital divide ensured that Blacks would continue to be denied opportunities for the next generation. When will this looting be denounced?

The institutional violence of racism emboldens individuals. White people are so aware of the racially charged power they wield that everyday citizens weaponize their whiteness by feigning fear, victimization and distress while criminalizing blackness in their pleas for help from law enforcement. The Amy Coopers of America confidently assert their place at the top of society's racial hierarchy knowing that the Derek Chauvins of police departments stand at the ready to use force and violence to enforce America's racial imbalance.

The killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd this year by those employed by law enforcement agencies have been publicized for the nation to see. The details of Breonna's killing along with the videos of George's and Ahmaud Arbery's murders painfully remind us that the sanctity of Black life means nothing in America. It didn't take the loss of their lives for many

of us to know that. Still yet, others seemed struck by the disregard for Black life as if it is a new revelation. But there is nothing new about the continued and systematic execution of countless Black women and men who have been killed by the parasitic government-sanctioned racism upon which this country stands.

The outrage we have seen this past week in hundreds of cities across the country reflects the sense of desperation and urgency to be heard, when many avenues for nonviolently taking a knee have been discounted or eliminated. This desperation arises from the ongoing disrespect for human rights and the increasing racial inequities and economic disparities. COVID-19 has disproportionately inflicted injury on the Black population, many of whom are risking their lives to work jobs on the front lines. The federal government channeled CARES relief to large corporations and has spent trillions saving Wall Street. Workers and small businesses were left to scrounge for the crumbs. Even public schools were sacrificed to save elite private schools. Every year, U.S. cities collectively spend \$100 billion on policing—while investments in schools, health care, housing, and community building programs go underfunded. White supremacy is scaling up to protect its own and this must stop.

The myth of a social contract for all has been exposed for what it is—a system that enforces rights and privileges for the haves, who are predominantly white. And that is who the onus to enact change is upon. White Americans need to stand up and say enough to the system that has created two Americas, one of whom is dying. We have to face the truth to heal, learn to live with being uncomfortable and complicit. Protest only focuses our attention; action that pursues change at all levels must follow. Changes in public policies, practices and representation must occur at federal, state and local levels to increase police accountability and promote racial equity. We must also recognize the silence and complicity of our institutions and commit to a strategy for change.

The longstanding demands for accountability and justice are not going away. They are central to the mission of the Social Justice Institute and we stand - both collectively and individually - with those in pursuit of them.

In Solidarity,

Ayesha Bell Hardaway, Co-Director

Mark Chupp, Co-Director

“A riot is the language of the unheard... And so in a real sense our nation’s summers of riots are caused by our nation’s winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention.”

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967

