



# GEORGE FLOYD SHOULD BE ALIVE TODAY



**George Floyd should be alive today.**

Instead, many of us witnessed him struggling to gasp for his last breaths of air for more than eight agonizing minutes under the knee of a police officer who took an oath to protect and serve. It remains hard to say what was more painful to watch, George Floyd, being stripped of all his dignity and humanity as his life was horrifically strangled from him, or the smug confidence of a murderer, staring into a camera, openly defiant in his willingness to betray the public trust and weaponize his badge against another completely defenseless human being, while essentially

taunting the crowd in their powerlessness to stop him. No decent person with any empathy can excuse what they saw in that video.



As a result, committed citizens of all backgrounds and races have taken to the streets to protest because we have had enough. And we know this is not right. We are now watching a fractured nation battle for its very soul as we wrestle with the consequences of this country's original sin of slavery. Since its inception, many in the United States, often those in power, have been unapologetically comfortable with the idea that some lives are more valuable and matter more than others. And that philosophy did not end with the abolition of slavery in 1865. It has survived Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement to the present day when a disproportionate number of unarmed Black men, women, and children are still killed—sometimes in their beds as they lay sleeping—victims of over-aggressive policing and outright police brutality and murder. This idea is so pervasive that sometimes even white vigilantes are not held accountable by the justice system for murdering black people. This is the direct legacy of a nation that built a great deal of its wealth off of the stolen and forced labor, suffering, and subjugation of Black people, and the stolen lands of indigenous people, all the while justifying these actions by saying that people of African descent were somehow less than HUMAN, and so they didn't MATTER.

But BLACK LIVES do MATTER. Black men, women, and children matter. George Floyd matters. Breonna Taylor matters. Tamir Rice matters. Aiyana Jones matters. And so did so many others who were unfairly deprived of their lives and dreams, their memories seemingly reduced to a never-ending stream of hashtags.

This time, perhaps because George Floyd's murder was so blatant in its savagery and the officer was caught on camera so emboldened, it has galvanized a movement in the hearts and minds of people all over this country and the world.

So, in standing with the many peaceful protestors—our community members, our fellow countrymen and women, and as global citizens calling for JUSTICE—HERE to HERE's staff and our board are committing to work toward becoming an actively anti-racist organization to intentionally build towards racial equity, both internally and through our external partnerships. And we recognize that we, like too many other organizations, have a lot of work to do.



At HERE to HERE, we measure our success by how well-positioned and prepared Bronx students are to enter careers that offer choice, financial stability in rewarding careers, and the opportunity to care for their families and community. Yet, the systems on which they depend to get a great career, achieve their dreams, and thrive—the educational system, employer hiring practices, formal training programs, the informal who-you-know networks, the property tax systems that pay for schools, transportation systems—have effectively served to reinforce white supremacy and keep Black and Brown people out. The cumulative effect of these deprivations is to limit the opportunities for Black and Brown young people, further perpetuating economic disparities along racial lines. These disparities lead to marginalization, which often leads to dehumanization. We know this is true in the Bronx, where we intentionally decided we wanted to have an impact and for the community here to whom we hold ourselves accountable. So while we believe strongly that a city and country as well resourced as ours, can be set up and held accountable to make the impactful changes necessary for every Black and Brown young person to succeed, we are also aware that even economic stability is not enough when we know that their safety and well-being depend on how other individuals judge them based on the color of the skin that they're in. It's bad enough when that individual is a hiring manager, but when those individuals are members of law enforcement, this judgment, particularly for Black people, can be especially violent, even fatal.

HERE to HERE's mission REQUIRES that we proactively challenge and ultimately work to dismantle the institutional and systemic racism that exists, which upholds the white supremacy and patriarchy that has maintained the power to punish and abuse black people with impunity.

We undertake the following actionable steps to further our goal of achieving a more racially equitable society:

- Leveraging our personal and organizational social capital and access to resources to amplify the voices of our partners, as well as other organizations that are seeking social justice and equity for people of color
- Diversifying our Board and staff Leadership as we expand as an organization



- Encouraging ourselves and our partner stakeholders to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations about racism and other inequities when necessary and when we see these inequities occur in order to advance racial justice and equity and make impactful changes for the communities we serve—being comfortable does not sustain growth
- Being better allies, both as individuals and as an organization, to our partners such as our founding partners DreamYard and Big Picture Learning, as well as other organizations that are doing anti-racist work and supporting anti-racist initiatives
- Demanding criminal justice and policing reform, the creation of independent review boards to hold police departments across the nation accountable for their actions, and an end to racial profiling

Every day HERE to HERE seeks to bridge multiple perspectives and lived experiences to achieve an ambitious goal. It is incredibly hard work because it demands tough conversations and building deep connections. But in this moment of heightened awareness, we are at a powerful inflection point for the nation, many of us are at one personally, and HERE to HERE is at one as well. Now is the time for all of us to step forward courageously as a powerful force for the change that this nation so desperately needs.

Black Lives Matter.

In solidarity,

The HERE to HERE team

