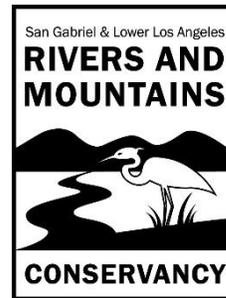


## Statement of Solidarity

Written from the perspective of a  
Black Executive Officer



When I first heard about the shooting of Ahmaud Arbery I was shocked that this is still happening in America. Then there was word of Breonna Taylor and the lack of accountability by the police. I watched the video that Christian Cooper took of Amy Cooper intentionally using his skin color as a weapon against him. If that was not enough, George Floyd was murdered for all the world to see. That was it. I'm done, I'm angry, this is sickening. It could be me.

I admire the bravery of demonstrators and embrace their cause. I am also full of grief. I grieve for the dead whose murderers go unpunished and for people of color who are needlessly made targets.

The effects of police brutality on African Americans goes well beyond killings, as the incident with Christian Cooper showed us there are calls for putting black people in peril. The frequency with which black people are put at risk to the point of murder by the police and the impunity of their persecutors suffuses the experience of the whole black community.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

African Americans cannot enjoy freedom of movement so long as they live in fear. So long as black men and women live under the looming threat of random death – on the street, in their cars, in their homes – the end of slavery in America, of which I am a direct descendant of and have always felt the sting of, will remain illusory. No one is free.

The murder by asphyxia of George Floyd makes it possible to draw a straight line between the killing of African Americans by police and the pandemic we are living through. The pandemic has killed a disproportionate number of African Americans, who are dying of asphyxia from COVID-19 for avoidable reasons. As a united people, Americans must take responsibility for the needless deaths of black people and for the needless deaths of uninsured and working poor throughout the country, whose lives are threatened and murdered as a result of neglect and simply not caring that black lives matter.

These realities will not go away without collective action and change. Americans of all colors are now “woke”, awakening to the injustice that African Americans have endured for generations. We must listen to the stories of what it is like to be black in America, acknowledge systemic racism, and reflect on how we can change. Yes, this may be uncomfortable, but let us move forward from here together and do better.

The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and Watershed Conservation Authority stand for equity and justice for all. We stand in solidarity against police brutality! It must end now! We will remain committed to addressing issues of environmental justice and will continue to work with our partners to support investments for the people in our high need communities. We celebrate the diversity of our staff, but we know there is still much to do to create healthier, more equitable and sustainable communities everywhere.

We want to highlight some organizations who have been working to elevate black lives and communities. Please support them and join them in fighting for a more just society.

[Empowerment Congress](#)

[Compton Cowboys](#)

[Community Coalition](#)

[Los Angeles Urban League](#)

[East Yard Communities of Environmental Justice](#)

[From Lot to Spot](#)

[Outdoor Afro](#)

[Black Lives Matter](#) and local chapters

[NAACP](#) and local chapters

--- Mark Stanley, Executive Officer, Rivers and Mountains Conservancy,  
Watershed Conservation Authority

