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Gov. Evers: We Must Confront Society's Comfort with Racism

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today released a video statement following the death of George Floyd and the ongoing unrest, urging Wisconsinites to offer their compassion, support, and action to the Black community. This includes calling on the Legislature to pass [Assembly Bill 1012](#), relating to use of force practices.

The video message is available [here](#).

Over the past few days, we have been grieving as another Black life was extinguished before our eyes. His name was George Floyd. He was 46. His life matters. His family deserves justice. And he should still be alive today.

But his death was not an anomaly. We hear the echo of the words of Eric Garner. We relive the pain of the death of Black Wisconsinites like Dontre Hamilton, Sylville Smith, Ernest Lacy, and Tony Robinson. We listen to the call and repeat, answered by generations of Black voices who've marched before in these very same streets.

George Floyd's death—and the lives taken before him—are symptomatic of the disease we've failed to adequately treat for four centuries. Racism has never really gone away—it has only manifested itself in different ways, from incarceration rates to health outcome disparities, the wage gap to education inequity, and in good intentions.

These past few days, millions have gathered to memorialize George Floyd, to demand change and accountability, and to call on this country to keep its promise of justice, fairness, and equity.

There was no empathy or humanity in George Floyd's death, but there must be empathy and humanity in our response to it. We must see the trauma, fear, and exhaustion of being Black in our state and in our country. We must reject the efforts of those who seek to undermine and distract from the pain of generations of injustice. We must condemn all those who encourage violence against Black lives. We must offer our compassion, we must offer our support, but most of all, we must offer our action.

We can start with accountability for unacceptable use of force by certain law enforcement officers in our country and our state. So, I am calling on the Legislature to immediately pass Assembly Bill 1012 that would reform our use of force policies by prioritizing preserving life and minimizing the use of force and send it to my desk for signature.

I am also calling for local government leaders to join us in demanding change, and I am asking for partners to step up in every corner of this state and put in the work that needs to be done.

This legislation is an important first step, but we know the solution to racism isn't in one bill or one person.

I know I don't have all the answers--no one does. This is on all of us, together.

We need systemic change to address the racism in our state and our country. We must be willing to face it, with clear eyes and open hearts, recognizing that folks who look like me have been part of creating, exacerbating, and benefiting from the systems that we must now turn to dismantle.

We must confront society's comfort with racism. We must reestablish trust with communities of color. We must be willing to listen, we must be willing to be uncomfortable, we must be willing to do the work.

We must lay bare the notion that this is not who we are. It is who we have been. It is who we are. But it is not who we have to be tomorrow.

I have seen hope in those who've joined this cause in support, who've lent a hand to a neighbor, who've showed up with brooms and dustbins in hand to help clean up our neighborhoods. We must use this dark moment to begin to be an example for the rest of the nation. Wisconsin will lead, we will listen, and we are going to put in the work.

Please be kind to each other, support each other, and keep each other safe tonight and in the days ahead. We have work to do tomorrow, together.

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