

***New Paltz Climate Action Coalition Statement:
“Black Lives Matter – It’s All About Justice”***

June 2020

“I can’t breathe,” the last words of George Floyd and Eric Garner, is a literal truth for communities of color as well as for too many individual Black people brutally murdered by police. As Reverend Lennox Yearwood Jr. explained, “68% of Black people live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant. We know that the destruction of Hurricanes Maria, Harvey, Katrina, and Superstorm Sandy all had a direct impact not only on marginalized and vulnerable communities but on communities of color, which reinforces that racial justice and climate justice are linked. But, to be clear, it’s all about justice.”

New Paltz Climate Action Coalition supports Black Lives Matter and the voices of those who are risking their health and lives, crying out for racial justice in towns and cities throughout our nation and around the globe. We addressed the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, as well as the larger context of intense racism, at our recent weekly meetings. People are disturbed and outraged. We have written letters demanding the arrest and prosecution of the four officers involved in murdering George Floyd. Members are now writing letters demanding justice for Breonna Taylor (her killers submitted bald-faced lies on their police incident report and they are still on the police payroll). Collectively, we agreed to join in protests supporting Black Lives Matter in New Paltz and Kingston.

What good will it do to run our society on clean renewable energy if we are only, as Bill McKibben puts it, “using solar power instead of coal to run the same sad mess of unfair and ugly oppression?” Police brutality and the climate crisis are bound together by the lethal impact they both have on our most vulnerable populations. Yet the climate movement has been slow to take on the issue of white supremacy in all its manifestations as part of the fight for climate justice.

Solidarity in this struggle for life itself is a two-way street. We climate activists need to show up for the fight against police brutality and in the larger battle against white supremacy. Let us listen to the voices from communities of color in the Hudson Valley and nationally, demanding justice for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Jamar Clark, Botham Jean, Laquan McDonald, Eric Garner, and so many more who’ve lost their lives to police brutality and to systematic, institutionalized racism.

Here are some organizations we urge you to consider joining, donating to and supporting: Citizen Action, ENJAN (End the New Jim Crow Action Network), Rise Up Kingston, De Facto Community Project, Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson, Ulster Immigrant Defense Network and SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice); and so many others nationally. As climate activists, we are their allies. They have often joined with us in stopping pipelines, banning fracking, halting new fracked gas power plants, pushing for great legislation such as CLCPA, and demanding divestment from climate destruction.

Let us stand together now, in loving solidarity, in all our strength, breaking out of the silos that separate movements in order to fight for racial justice and to save our planet.

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