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MLK Labor Affirms Commitment to an Anti-Racist Union Movement; Demands SPOG, Mayor Durkan Make Immediate Changes to Address Systemic Racism in Seattle Police Department

This week, the MLK Labor Executive Board met to discuss and respond to the extraordinary events of the past week. [The Board passed a resolution](#) that affirms that systemic racism exists in the Seattle Police Department and must be immediately addressed to protect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in our community from harm. The resolution rejects the notion that police brutality is a result of a few “bad actors,” calls for labor to play a role in redefining the role of law enforcement, and denounces the approach of the Durkan administration in responding to peaceful protests against police violence.

The Executive Board outlined a list of demands for Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan to take action on to address police violence, including:

- Commit to reforming law enforcement through policy, oversight, labor-management partnership, and collective bargaining in order to make community safety a priority
- Ask the City Attorney to decline to press charges for all individuals who were arrested for activities related to peaceful protests
- Lead with people and ground in racial justice in all public statements, minimizing property considerations to the full extent possible

The Executive Board also called on the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) to stand with the labor community by committing to become an anti-racist organization. The Board outlined several actions of SPOG in order to regain the support of the labor community and remain in the labor council. These actions are:

- A meeting between representatives of the MLK Labor Executive Board and the SPOG Executive Board, to occur within the next two weeks
- An affirmation by SPOG that racism is a structural problem in our society and in law enforcement that, until addressed, creates undue harm on BIPOC communities,
- Participation in a labor working space dedicated to promoting safety in our community and within law enforcement by addressing racism within SPOG as an institutional actor and ensuring that contracts do not evade legitimate accountability

The Board gave SPOG until June 17 to take these actions or else a vote of the delegate body would take place on the question of whether to remove them from the council.

“As a black woman leader in the labor movement and in the healthcare field, I have fought to apply a racial justice lens to every aspect of the work I lead,” **said Jane Hopkins, RN, Executive Vice President of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW.** “In our fight against COVID-19, we see that our BIPOC community members are dying at considerably higher rates than our white counterparts. This is not a coincidence. I cannot run head-long at fighting this disease without acknowledging the pandemic within the pandemic—systemic racism. We must do the tough but necessary work of calling in our siblings in law enforcement to partner with us to address systemic racism and how it shows up through policing. This difficult work is how we can start to heal the disease that is literally killing people who look like me and my children.”

“The system of policing in our society is being demonstrated to be broken. Labor can play a critical role, along with our community and elected leaders, in redefining the role of law enforcement in our society by following the lead of our sisters and brothers in the broader community,” **said Joe Mizrahi, Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW 21 and a member of the MLK Labor Executive Board.**

“There is and has been an epidemic of racist police violence targeting Black Americans, our sisters, brothers, and siblings in the labor movement. As unionists, when we see injustice, it is our obligation to call it out,” **said April Sims, Secretary-Treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council.**

“There is raw pain in our community, and police are a driving source of that pain. As a labor movement, we acknowledge that institutional racism exists within our organizations and we must work to dismantle these racist systems. We invite our fellow union members at the Seattle Police Department into our shared work of fighting racism within labor and in our society. We hope they join us in that journey,” **said Nicole Grant, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of MLK Labor.**

The full resolution is available here:

<http://mlklabor.org/resolutions/resolution-affirming-our-commitment-to-an-anti-racist-union-movement/>