

Dear friends,

These are difficult and painful days in America. We are confronted—again—with a horrible reality: Innocent Black people are repeatedly killed in our country.

We all are saddened, outraged at the ongoing injustice; and we stand in empathy and support of those families and communities, our African American brothers and sisters, so cruelly hurt. As Jews, we have our own history of suffering injustice and violence of all kinds; and so we have the sensibility, and a special moral duty, to refuse to stay passive while our neighbors are bleeding.

Please see the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) [statement](#), and the CCAR [Rabbis' statement on racist killings](#).

This is a tragic and sad moment in our country, but it may also be the moment that gets us mobilized enough to finally bring the needed changes. Many, hopefully most, Americans now realize that our problem is not “simple racism” or “bad apples” in police—it is the entrenched racism well organized in our laws, in our economy, in our courts, in our law enforcement, in our government, and in our schools, that creates the conditions leading to these killings, decade after decade. We begin to understand that this does not call for “a fix” but calls for real changes.

On these days, I have wrestled with the questions we all are wrestling with: “What can I do about all this? How can I do something to make a change?” Sometimes it looks like all we can do is lament and protest. But as we do both, there are also significant actions we can take: These will not solve things quickly, but they do bring change.

Take a look at these actions you, we, can take now from home:

- Send [this message](#) to your Congressmen.
- Learn about and support [local organizations](#) in sustained efforts on structural racism.
- Join, donate, and support the NAACP, and their campaign [We Are Done Dying](#).

If you can safely go out, take the action. Join me at Prayer Walk for Social Justice on Saturday, June 6, at 4:30 p.m. in Raleigh. These are the details:

The Raleigh Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (RIMA) will host a Prayer Walk for Social and Racial Justice—many other organizations and faith communities are joining. The Prayer Walk will take place on Saturday, June 6, at the Duke Center for the Performing Arts located at 2 East South Street, Raleigh, NC 27601. From there, we will walk down Fayetteville Street to the Old State Capitol grounds, wherein those gathered will be addressed by faith leaders. Beth Shalom people will gather at 4:30 p.m. by McDonald's parking lot (corner of Wilmington and South), and the Prayer Walk will start at 5:00 p.m. *We are encouraged to bring signs that incorporate Jewish symbols or*

words to make clear that we stand in solidarity with all people of color as Jews. We are all asked to wear masks and stay appropriately distant.

Especially for us at Beth Shalom:

For a couple of years now, we have been part of a coalition of 36 institutions ([ONE Wake](#)), which includes many Black churches, working to bring about a more fair and just society here in Wake County. In long conversations with clergy and community leaders in this organization this week, we agreed that the killings—tragic as they are—are only a final result of other injustices which affect us and affect African Americans especially: segregated neighborhoods, unequal access to education, lack of jobs and living wages, the threat of homelessness and lack of affordable housing. We committed to strengthen our efforts for **changes to those roots of the injustices** that bring about poverty and inequality, and perpetuate the conditions that lead to the killings.

As you take your own individual actions, consider making a **commitment to engage** in our ongoing coalition work: support our Black siblings and neighbors by working together, all colors, in alliance, to tackle the main issues we face. Since we, Beth Shalom, are the only Jewish participating institution, your participation in it is also a stand in the name of the Jewish community, in solidarity and walking hand in hand with African Americans and all our neighbors of all faiths and origins.

Just let [Ross Tabachow](#) or me know you want to make a difference, and participate in our One Wake Beth Shalom team.

As Jews, we have learned the hard way that no matter how hard our reality is now, we cannot despair. We have overcome a lot, and so we can and will overcome again. This always starts with abandoning passivity, embracing the hope that we can act and bring change. Let's push our country now to embrace the highest spirit of America, committing to "liberty and justice **for all**," and we may find our path to life in peace. As the prophet taught: "when such spirit takes over us...*then the acts of justice will bring enduring peace.*" (Isaiah 32:15-17) Let's act now.

Kindest regards,
Rabbi Ariel Edery