

3 June 2020

**Statement by Canadian Reform Judaism
on Systemic Racism Targeting the Black Community
and our Moral Responsibility**

Last week, on Shavuot, we celebrated the giving of the Torah. Our Torah commands us to “not stand idly by while your neighbour’s blood is shed” (Leviticus 19:16). Two verses later it tells us “Love your neighbour as yourself – I am God” (Leviticus 19:18).

Last week also saw yet another example of fatal anti-Black racism come to light with the murder of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis. Meanwhile, in Toronto, we mourn the passing of 29-year-old Regis Korchinski-Paquet, who fell to her death after police were called to help her. In shock and in grief, we extend our condolences to Mr. Floyd’s and Ms. Korchinski-Paquet’s families and friends and pray that their memories forever be for a blessing.

Racism and racist violence continue to cut short Black lives with unbearable frequency. George Floyd’s death can only be understood as a result of historical and persistent discrimination, oppression, and prejudice that are deeply embedded in our societal structures.

We reach out to Black community members, fellow congregants, friends and neighbours who are in pain, frightened or angry to offer support and to demonstrate our presence. We join in solidarity with those protesting the murder of George Floyd and those calling for a full and impartial investigation of the events surrounding the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. We join our hearts and conscience with all People of Colour who have died from racism and hate and pledge to do all within our power to foster a more equitable and just society.

We know that Black Canadians experience racism here in Canada just as Black Americans experience racism across the border. Canada has our own long history of racism, which continues particularly to impact First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We still have much work to do to engage in meaningful reconciliation. We have also seen in the era of COVID-19 an increase in racist incidents targeting members of the Asian community, and acts of violence and hatred directed at the Jewish community. We call on our institutions and communities to do better.

Building on the statements of the [Union for Reform Judaism](#), of the [Central Conference of American Rabbis](#), and [that](#) of the URJ’s Chris Harrison, writer and editor for [audacious hospitality](#), we invite all our communities to join us in demonstrating our solidarity with Black and racialized Canadians by:

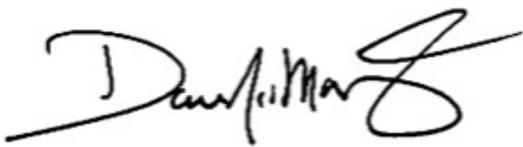
- Reaching out to Black communities to offer support, to listen to their needs, and having the courage to act in partnership and solidarity;
- Ensuring that our congregations and Jewish institutions speak out against acts of racism whenever they occur and follow up with action to change policies that perpetuate systemic racism;



- Supporting Jews of Colour in our communities and speaking out against unconscious biases and discrimination within our Jewish communities;
- Reiterating the importance of independent police oversight and calling for the funding and provision of police body cameras for federal and provincial police officers, and the continued review by relevant human rights bodies to eradicate police brutality, to eliminate impunity, and to ensure better and more just policing of our most vulnerable populations.

The events of the past week have focused our collective attention on the work we must do to counter anti-Black racism. Let us honour the memories of George Floyd and Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and all People of Colour who have been persecuted because of the colour of their skin by committing to meaningful action.

The Canadian Reform Movement and the Reform Rabbis of Canada will work together over the next days and weeks to develop and share more concrete steps that we can take in our homes and in our communities, for our children and for our elders, to address systemic racism, unconscious bias, and discrimination. Together may we engage in a deep and meaningful *tikkun*, may we work to heal and build a better world founded on deep respect for all human beings, created *betzelem Elohim*, in G-d's image.



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