



Image: Mark Felix / AFP / Getty, The New Yorker

Some Are Guilty, All Are Responsible

It has now been a week of rage, grief and trauma in the streets of our cities, following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer. We are in the midst of a rebellion, an uprising against centuries of injustice. The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, just over these past few months, reveal the normalization of hatred and fear of Black people in America, the danger of aggressive police action, and the profound need for a nation-wide reckoning with our painful history of racism. This is not only a moment, it is a movement—one that aligns with our deepest commitments to justice and human dignity, equity and equality for all people.

We are outraged by the president's threat to move the US military into the streets of American cities, and the violent removal of peaceful protesters from Lafayette Park last night. We are alarmed by the photo op, bible in hand, in front of St John's Episcopal Church. Our country has a long, shameful history of weaponizing religious imagery to justify cruel, inhumane, racist abuses of power. We recall that slave holders used the bible to justify enslavement of millions of people over hundreds of years, and we fear that yesterday's stunt was a public message of support for white supremacists and far right white Christian groups. Our faith calls us to fight for justice, and to affirm that all human beings are created in God's own image and deserve to be treated as such.

We call upon our local leaders to do everything possible to deescalate violence, and to use this moment as a catalyst for real, structural change. Los Angeles and California have a long history of police brutality and systemic racism, and the people are crying out not only for accountability, but for real justice. IKAR activists and organizers have worked over the years to win sentencing reform, end cash bail, and tighten California's police use of force law, but there is still much to be done. We are committed to continuing this holy and critical work in partnership with our multi-faith partners from LA Voice and Faith in Action.

We know that there are heartfelt differences of opinion within our community about how best to achieve the justice we seek, including critical questions about the city budget. Our Minyan Tzedek leadership is working to create a forum for us to educate and train our community on these issues so that we can be more informed advocates and use our collective voice most powerfully.

To our Black family and to all People of Color who live with the pain of injustice every day, we stand with you in solidarity and love.

We all must remain vigilant and careful in the days to come—to protect our bodies, our neighbors and our democracy. If you are in the streets, please stay safe and

nonviolent. Remember that the pandemic continues to rage through this country and the world. And know that any act of vandalism or threat of violence—against the police or against property—undermines and distracts from the call to justice.

In 1972, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: “Morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings. Indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, [and] in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.”

That is the call of our day. We are all responsible.

Beloved community, please take care of yourselves. Take care of each other. Know that if we do the work that the moment demands, we will transform this hour of cacophony and catastrophe into the opening chords of a beautiful, just, multi-racial society.

Rabbi Sharon Brous

What Can I Do? There are many ways to get involved. Here are some suggestions compiled by our team:

Give:

[The Bail Project](#), a nonprofit that aims to mitigate incarceration rates through bail reform.

[NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#), which supports racial justice through advocacy, litigation, and education.

[ACLU](#) Provides legal services and support for a broad range of people with civil rights complaints.

[Communities United Against Police Brutality](#) operates a crisis hotline where people can report abuse; offers legal, medical, and psychological resource referrals; and engages in political action against police brutality.

Act:

[LA Voice and IKAR Community Organizing](#) – Join our ongoing work for justice and racial equity. Right now, we and our multi-faith, multi-racial partners from across the county are meeting elected officials at every level of government to call for moral budgets that support people and reduce policing and incarceration. We are powerful when we show up together for the long fights. Email mtorganizing@ikar-la.org to join

our email list and come to [our meeting](#), Tuesday, June 16 at 7 pm.

Read [this piece](#) from our friend Eric Ward from Western States Center, who offers 21 Things We Can Do Right Now to work toward justice, equality and democracy:

Check out [LA Forward](#), a grassroots organization in L.A. focused on addressing inequities and injustice, and [Campaign Zero](#), which offers a comprehensive guide to policies that aim to correct excessive force, racial profiling, for-profit policing, and much more. They also accept donations.

And join a peaceful protest if you feel you can do so safely.

Learn:

Check out these [resources for white people to learn](#) about racism, this great [video from Trevor Noah](#) on the domino effect and how we got where we are today, and this segment from [Chris Cuomo from CNN](#) on George Floyd's death, the pandemic, and this moment of national outrage.



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