



## **Statement from OAESV Board of Directors on Protests in Response to the Deaths of Black People and Systemic Injustices**

The Board of Directors of the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) has witnessed the expressions of pain and suffering, along with demands for justice in our communities across the state of Ohio, throughout the country, and the world. We share our grief, anger, and horror at the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, the countless other black lives that have been taken, and those that we sadly know have yet to come.

We recognize that these protests are not just about the murders of black men and women at the hands of the police. While horrific, that issue only scratches the surface of what is and has happened. ***These deaths represent the worst consequences of centuries of racism and other oppressions, which have infected our society at every level*** – from microaggressions spewed by classmates or coworkers, minimal to zero representation of people of color in neighborhood leadership, to the structural inequalities in education and healthcare that have resulted in unequal opportunities and disparate quality of life outcomes.

We recognize that, as leaders of an organization whose mission is to eliminate sexual violence, all oppression is connected and that in order to end sexual violence, we must also work to eliminate all forms of oppression.

We recognize that silence is unacceptable, and we must both embrace our own voices and elevate the voices of people of color who are doing anti-oppression work. We take responsibility for the ways in which we have perpetuated a culture of white supremacy as an organization, past and present. We commit to educating ourselves and to holding those in our spheres of influence accountable. Those of us who are aspiring allies will inevitably falter or err. We must be willing to make mistakes, to hold each other accountable, to be ongoing learners, and to engage in these crucial conversations.

We recognize and honor the OAESV staff, as well as our member organizations and their staff, as they must balance serving survivors of sexual violence, often working closely with our police and legal systems, while also simultaneously naming and calling for an end to the inherent injustices in those systems.

We recognize that solidarity is the only path forward, and that standing in solidarity is an ongoing practice that means more than reading books or attending protests. As bell hooks writes in *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, “While it is important that individuals work to transform their consciousness, striving to be anti-racist, it is important for us to remember that the struggle to end white supremacy is a struggle to change a system, a structure... For

our efforts to end white supremacy to be truly effective, individual struggle to change consciousness must be fundamentally linked to collective effort to transform those structures that reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy” (p 195).

Lastly, in recognition of the reality that attending protests may not be accessible for everyone, we share this list of tools to help engage in anti-racist efforts and encourage you, if you have not yet, to read and share the following statements and resources:

- The [statement](#) from the Ohio Aspiring White Allies Committee “For White People: Direct Asks Centering on #BlackLivesMatter”
- OAESV’s [statement](#) in solidarity with community members peacefully protesting the recent deaths of Black individuals and police violence
- This incredibly comprehensive [list](#) of anti-racism resources

*Embrace Your Voice, Ohio. The time is now.*

The OAESV Board of Directors

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