

Justice for Eric Garner and What We Must Do Together

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“*I can’t breathe.*” Once again our justice system has failed a Black man. For Eric Garner the brutality of his death is recorded for all to see. How many Black and brown bodies must be lost before we change both the laws that govern our systems and a culture that denies their humanity? Public safety and racial justice are not mutually exclusive. We can have safe, healthy communities that respect the lives and dignity of people of color.

As NYC Police Commissioner Bill Bratton applauds the NYPD for instituting body cameras, we now know even when Black men die at the hands of police officers, having recorded proof of action doesn’t guarantee consequences. Incremental change is not enough; we must address the deep structural and institutional racism that is embedded in our society.

CSI President Glenn Harris says, “*We must change policy, practice and culture. Without a complete overhaul of our systems, we will never get to a society where Black lives are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.*”

Again, we must ask, how many must die before action is taken?

We must:

- Demand that NYPD undergo education on implicit bias and structural racism.
- Demand more training on de-escalation strategies and a review of “use of force” policies.
- Demand that police officers be held to the same criminal standards as the rest of us.
- Demand a federal investigation into the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

Lastly, we must all recognize that all of our societal institutions are failing communities of color. Changing police practices is critically important, but **we cannot stop there**. We must together address as a whole **structural racism** – the cumulative and multi-generational impact of institutional policies in housing, education, transportation, food, etc., that often lead to different life outcomes for communities of color, particularly Black communities, and that create the fertile ground on which these tragedies happen.

Black lives matter.

About the Center for Social Inclusion:

The Center for Social Inclusion works to unite public policy research and grassroots advocacy to transform structural inequity and exclusion into structural fairness and inclusion. CSI works with community groups and national organizations to develop policy ideas, foster effective leadership, and develop communications tools for an opportunity-rich world in which we all will thrive.

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