



**July 1, 2020**

Dear Whittier Community,

Since the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police on May 25th, our city has experienced an unprecedented outpouring of grief, anger, fear, and solidarity. Words alone will never be enough to communicate our sorrow and anger, but we feel compelled in this moment to speak out, and to commit to doing more. Our hearts broke for the family and loved ones of George Floyd, as they did for those of Thurman Blevins Jr., Jamar Clark, Terrance Franklin, and too many others who have been killed at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) over the years. Our hearts are heavy, but we are committed to turning our sorrow and anger into action.

For decades, the MPD has perpetrated egregious violence and injustice on the Black and Brown people of this city, and too many of us have not done enough. Today, we stand with our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) neighbors against police brutality, we stand with the activists who have been fighting the injustice of our policing system for many years, and we stand with the thousands of people who took to the streets to give voice to their anger and hurt.

The Whittier Alliance represents a community of multiracial, multi-ethnic, and multilingual neighbors who are diverse in ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, faith, socio-economic and immigration status. We are tasked with organizing within and representing the needs of our community, and in this moment we know that this requires us to fight for our community members that are struggling under the weight of injustice and structural racism. Many neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis, including the Whittier Alliance, have a long history of being led by and serving primarily the white homeowners of their neighborhoods. We cannot do the work of tearing down an unjust system if we are unable or unwilling to acknowledge the ways in which we allowed for and contributed to it, and we know we have to do better.

Working toward racial justice requires more of us than lip service and checking boxes. We delayed putting out a statement until we had commitments we could include so that we can ask our neighbors to both work with us and hold us accountable. We will be taking immediate action to accelerate building trust and breaking down barriers in our organization and community. Today, and every day, we will be taking the following steps in pursuit of racial justice in our neighborhood and our city:

### **Culture and Approach**

- We commit to conducting all of our work through a racial justice lens, and to asking ourselves with every decision we make whether we are working toward the just community we envision.
- We commit to acknowledging and taking responsibility for harms we've committed in the past, and to learning from our history and from our community about ways that we can do better.
- We commit to constantly working to foster a culture of inclusiveness and anti-racism in our organization and our neighborhood. We recognize that this is a journey, not a destination, and we commit to an openness to growth and learning from our mistakes.
- We commit to making every effort to recruit board members and staff that reflect the diversity of our neighborhood, and removing barriers that may pose challenges to people with marginalized identities.
- We commit to investing in required racial justice training from trusted BIPOC community organizations for all staff, contractors, and board members.



## **Budgeting and Spending**

- We commit to prioritizing making purchases for the organization at BIPOC-owned businesses in the community whenever possible.
- We commit to reexamining our budget to focus our spending on grants and programs that will have systemic impacts.

## **Events**

- We commit to never inviting uniformed MPD officers to organization meetings and events, and to not working with security companies that hire current or former MPD officers.
- We commit to hosting free, public community events and trainings with racial justice themes to help all community members become better allies and activists.

## **Advocacy**

- We commit to using our platform as a neighborhood organization and our relationships with elected officials to advocate for a more just system of community safety and for other racial justice issues.
- We commit to following the lead of BIPOC-led community organizations working toward racial justice in the city, and to aiding their efforts whenever possible.
- We commit to using Whittier Alliance resources to educate and inform community members about alternatives to policing.

## **Community Engagement**

- We commit to taking actions that will further build relationships between community members, because we know that a more connected community is a more just community.
- We commit to avoiding replicating the current system of policing in discussions of and programs relating to community safety.
- We commit to applying the same standard of shared values to the businesses and organizations with whom we partner as we do to ourselves
- We commit to transparency and accountability in our anti-racism journey, and to keeping the community updated on the steps we are taking to fulfill these commitments as well as those that we will continue to develop.

Because the work is never done, we are also committed to constantly striving for justice and seeking out ways to improve our work for the BIPOC members of our community, as well as others facing multitudes of injustice in Whittier. We will strive to be open to criticism, and to new ideas that we can implement in pursuit of this goal.

After George Floyd's murder, and in the protests that followed, we witnessed our city and our neighborhood come together in sorrow, in strength, and in solidarity. Community members across Whittier felt called to connect with neighbors, to support one another in ways big and small, and to share their visions of a safe, connected community without police. We are awed by the resilience of the Whittier community, and we can do no less than promise that we will do everything in our power to work toward that vision with you. If you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, you can always reach out to the Whittier Alliance office.

In Solidarity,

**Whittier Alliance Board & Staff**