

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES, INC.  
ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE RECENT KILLINGS OF THREE UNARMED BLACK PEOPLE  
AND DEMANDS IMMEDIATE CHANGE**

**LOS ANGELES, Calif., May 30, 2020.** Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc. (“BWL”) issues the following statement:

*Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc. (BWL) is deeply saddened and disturbed by the recent deaths of three unarmed Black men and women. We honor the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and pray that their families, friends and loved ones find comfort and peace in this time of grief. The members of BWL stand with you, we hear you and we understand your frustration, anger and pain.*

*Unfortunately, we are all too familiar with injustices committed against communities of color, and the systemic and painful institutional racism directed at our communities by law enforcement and vigilantes throughout this country. Over the past eight years, civilian cell phones have captured what we have long understood to be a daily risk of being Black in America.*

*We heard the last words of Trayvon Martin as he was killed walking home from a convenience store. We also watched 18-year-old Michael Brown, an unarmed Black boy, be fatally shot by a white police officer after leaving a convenience store. We saw the brutality of Eric Garner’s arrest for suspicion of illegally selling loose cigarettes – he would later die in police custody. We were devastated by the loss of nine Black worshipers at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, who were shot by a white supremacist. We saw the body cam footage of the traffic stop that preceded Sandra Bland’s arrest and incarceration, and mourned when she was later found hanging from a noose in the jail. In 2016 we witnessed Alton Sterling, a Black man shot several times at close range while held down on the ground by two white Baton Rouge, LA, police officers. We saw the life leave Philando Castile’s body after he was fatally shot by an officer after being pulled over in his car in a suburb of St. Paul, MN. In 2017, we saw a white nationalist rally turn deadly in Charlottesville, VA – and President Trump describe the white nationalist terrorists as “good people.” In 2018, we learned that Botham Jean was killed by an off duty white officer as she entered his apartment purportedly believing it was her own, and in 2019, Atatiana Jefferson was shot in her home playing video games with her nephew when the police were only supposed to check on occupants’ well-being.*

*We know these tragic stories all too well. President Barack Obama said “[w]hen incidents like this occur, there’s a big chunk of our fellow citizenry that feels as if because of the color of their skin, they are not being treated the same. And that hurts. And that should trouble all of us.”*

*BWL calls on its members, allies and lawmakers to prevent these deaths from being reduced to clever memes on social media. We need to act and create change. The kind of change that provides real consequences for the brutality inflicted on people of color in America. The kind of change that provides consequences for people who make false claims against Black men who are simply living their daily lives and bird watching in the park, or Black men who are sitting at a coffee shop minding their own business, or Black men enjoying a barbeque in the park. We cannot idly stand by and allow this latest wave of atrocities to pass by without making a concerted effort to bring about change.*

*BWL commits to using our power, ability and influence to shape and direct this conversation towards holding people accountable for their bad behavior. No longer will we wring our hands and lament that yet another Black person has been unjustly murdered. Therefore, we demand:*

- That Congress enact legislation making filing a report with any law enforcement agency, falsely accusing a person of color of physical attack, threatening to commit a violent act or carrying a weapon, a federal crime (a violation of the section 1983 of the United States Code) and that state legislatures similarly enact legislation making such false accusations a felony (hate crime) punishable by mandatory custody time and fines .*
- That the federal government form a multiracial, multigenerational, gender diverse, nonpartisan national commission to provide civilian oversight of all police departments/law enforcement agencies with complaints of racial bias, racial profiling, disparate treatment, or police brutality. Require the commission to maintain statistics and publish biannual reports.*
- That the respective local prosecutors and the Department of Justice promptly and without delay launch investigations into these crimes, file charges, and transparently release the findings of such investigations. Further, in cases where it is necessary, the national commission shall appoint a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute such incidents.*
- That federal and state legislatures enact legislation establishing the right for any person/bystander to video and audio record law enforcement encounters/arrests and overt racism/racist behavior toward Black people and others so long as they are not physically hindering the law enforcement authorities in the performance of their duties.*
- That charges be filed against any law enforcement officer as an accomplice, who fails to intervene or render aid in any acts of excessive force or brutality by principal officer(s) which results in serious bodily injury or death.*
- That a national reporting investigative protocol automatically activate immediately whenever an unarmed Black person is killed.*

*While these measures will not bring back the unjustly lost lives, we believe that they are a step in the right direction to prevent further similar acts from occurring and to swiftly hold accountable those who act with deadly malice and unfettered racism towards Black people and bring truth to the words, "... and justice for all."*

Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc., is a non-profit corporation whose mission is dedicated to charitable, educational and community-based services. To learn more about BWL, visit [www.blackwomenlawyersla.org](http://www.blackwomenlawyersla.org). Also, find us on Facebook and Instagram @BlackWomenLawyersLA, and follow us on Twitter @BWLofLA.

**About Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc.**

Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc. is a non-profit corporation whose mission is dedicated to charitable, educational and community-based services. BWL was founded in 1975 after a small group of Los Angeles based African-American women judges and attorneys held a luncheon meeting to discuss the marked absence of an organization which addressed the needs and concerns of African-American women in the legal profession.

The dialogue and events that followed became the genesis of BWL. Over the years, BWL branched out and grew through its various community projects and committee activities. The first BWL scholarship luncheon was held in 1975 at the Medallion Restaurant. Since then, BWL has raised scholarship funds annually for second and third year law students through its annual fundraising efforts.