

June 2, 2020

ACC Statement on the Death of George Floyd

In the face of a global pandemic, we have once again been tragically reminded of an even more pervasive threat which continues to afflict societies around the world — racism and social injustice. The past week in the United States has been especially brutal, as history repeated itself with the death of George Floyd, yet another unarmed African American man killed while in police custody in Minneapolis, MN. Not for the first time, we witnessed, on video, a police officer viciously take the life of a black man. Who among us could watch the video of George Floyd, pleading for the ability to simply breathe, and not feel repulsed and alarmed that any human being would be treated with such callousness, especially at the hands of those who are sworn to serve and protect us.

As an organization of in-house counsel, we rely on and uphold the laws of business, and the land, seeking to ensure equity and fairness “for all.” Unfortunately, for far too long, people of color have not experienced the same sense of protection and fairness under the law. In fact, the exact opposite is true, as many communities of color have endured decades of disparity, and that experience has led to distrust of law enforcement and the legal system. Blatant discrimination is not and should not be tolerated in our companies and equally cannot be tolerated within our community. Lady Justice may wear a blindfold symbolizing impartiality, but the unacceptable reality for millions of people throughout the United States and around the world proves that we have much work to do to achieve this ideal.

To help bridge that divide, ACC joins with leaders in the corporate and legal communities worldwide to affirm with one voice that social injustice and inequality cannot and must not be tolerated. We must also make clear that any kind of discrimination, be it race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability, has no place among supporters of a free and democratic society.

In the days ahead, we will work with our members and partners to establish opportunities for the in-house community to discuss and develop best practices and resources to promote racial understanding and diversity. However, our goal cannot be to just return to “business as usual” as the status quo is simply unacceptable. We must first come together as a society to acknowledge a history rooted in institutional racism, discrimination, and biases based on color, if we ever hope to institute real change to end this cycle of senseless violence and hate.

To that end, ACC is committed to going beyond the discussion. We are committed to identifying actions each of us can take to help make a difference within our communities. I look forward to working with you in the coming days and weeks. As CEO of this big, global, diverse association of corporate counsel, I will be calling on you to join together and lead. We can and we will build bridges. We are in this together.

Veta T. Richardson
President & CEO, Association of Corporate Counsel
President, ACC Foundation