



(24 Organizations in MA, CT, NY, NJ, MD, DC, VA, NC, OH, IL, WI)

**Anger, Faith, Hope**

The last minutes of George Floyd's life evoke the 22nd Psalm:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
And are so far from my cry  
And from the words of my distress?*

*O my God, I cry in the daytime but you do not answer;  
By night as well, but I find no rest.*

So, too, do our thoughts go to our own memories of Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, and Freddie Gray--sons of our cities: New York, Cleveland, and Baltimore--black men murdered by police brutally, callously. Our anger and rage rise again.

The white officers' knee on George Floyd's neck for nine minutes while he pleads for his mother evokes 400 years of kidnappings, lynchings, rapes, family separations, slavery and forced labor, share cropping, equity stripping, unjust imprisonment, medical experiments, job discrimination that denies the humanity and full citizenship of black Americans.

As we watch protesters in Minneapolis and other cities across the country, we know their lamentations must be shouted, must be heard, must not be silenced. For it is only in giving voice to the pain and suffering of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and the thousands of other black people killed in our cities and millions scarred by racism that we might ever begin to imagine a new future.

The shouts must be louder, broader and much longer before this can come to pass though. And we must listen; we must take account. We must relate to the many people who are suffering. In so doing, we must ask: How is God speaking in the streets? What new message, what good news do we hear?

And we must follow this anger to new places: the confluence of institutional racism which causes black, brown, and poor Americans to die at disproportionately higher rates from Covid-19; People of color forced to work on the frontlines of the pandemic without personal protective equipment in hospitals, grocery stores, and internet commerce warehouses; 40 million Americans, many in our houses of worship, schools and unions, who are unemployed and are fighting to feed their families, pay their bills, get their kids internet access---all knowing that they could drop off the eviction and foreclosure cliff and be homeless in the next month.

*June 5, 2020*

*From Metro IAF Strategy Team*

How is God speaking through them? How is God rising up in them? What good news do we hear? People of faith must answer this question in this moment: “Am I inspired now by and for God to do God’s justice in the world?” Similar questions are posed to those who ascribe to the values of our democratic republic.

If so, how will we relate to those that suffer? Will we go beyond the comfort of our sanctuaries and homes into the workplaces and unemployment lines, onto the buses and subways, into the prisons, public housing, community health clinics, and homeless shelters to know our neighbors who cry out in “many different tongues” for help?

We stand against violence--first and foremost, against the violence propagated by our bankrupt politics. National, state, and local leaders incite citizens to dehumanize and stereotype those that are different. Tweets, social media posts, and bots taunt us to hate one another: white, black, brown, yellow; conservative, moderate, and liberal; muslim, christian, and jew; citizen, permanent resident, and the undocumented.

We believe in an America that works for all of us not just some of us. Some of the anger of today reflects that it is not working for all of us. We seek to restore a politics that values and respects the other person; that promotes vigorous debate and argument; that leads to negotiation and compromise on shared interests. We reject a politics that values tribe over the common good, where arguments are settled with force instead of informed consent.

As our cities are in turmoil, we pray for peace. We want to channel ours’ and others’ rage and anger to make change, to create new realities. In a moment that appears hopeless and despairing to many, we renew our call to organize for justice---as we did in Cleveland to win a US Department of Justice consent decree to reform the Cleveland police in the aftermath of the Tamir Rice murder, and as we are doing in Baltimore to win living wage jobs for 850 returning citizens at John Hopkins Health System and other anchor institution employers, and as we have done to win statewide criminal justice reform in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Virginia. The job is not done. We are dedicated to building more power to purge injustice from the system from the ground-up no matter how long it takes.

George Floyd’s and the other murders of black people, the Covid 19 pandemic, and the economic collapse unveil what we have always known: there is an equity gap in America based on race and income. America is not working for all us but it is working for some of us at the expense of somebody else. If it doesn’t work for all of us then America is not working for any of us.

This can only change through organizing and building more power, not vague expressions of sympathy and love. By organizing we mean building new and dynamic relationships within and across communities and institutions that reflects a deep respect for the ideas, traditions and experience of others but also a commitment to building strong bonds to challenge and recreate structures and systems which limit the potential of our citizens. Metro IAF commits to make this moment constructive and to harness our anger to reach out to those in the streets, in the unemployment lines, in frontline jobs, and in organizations in our local communities with whom we have yet to relate to form new alliances to expand our collective power.

*June 5, 2020*

*From Metro IAF Strategy Team*

Metro IAF invites new leaders and institutions to build and use this power with us to push corporate executives, elected officials, civic sector leaders at the metropolitan, state, and federal levels to make change on issues that are community and life changing. We will come to power with real solutions from our organizing that insure all Americans have a quality place to live, which we know makes or breaks families; fully funded education that provides young people a path to success; criminal justice and mental health reform, a key to black life survival; equitable public health access, partnering with community and health institutions for those who have lacked it for so long; and living wage jobs and benefits with a career path and the right to organize, critical to the dignity and hope of every family.

For 80 years, we in the IAF have organized for power and respect to turn our anger into real and long lasting change, like the 5,000 Nehemiah first-time, primarily black and brown homeowners in East New York and the South Bronx, who now have \$3 billion+ in family wealth, arisen from our sweat equity and the wasteland of blight and hopelessness. Our “political self-respect” and hope are anchored in our faith, our democratic traditions, and our track record on winning universal healthcare, living wages, sentencing and bail reform, small high schools, in-state tuition for immigrants, and universal pre-k, among others. Join us as we build better local communities and a stronger nation and challenge in constructive ways the perils which threaten us all.

In this dark hour, we are propelled to this call to which we invite all to join us:

*O, let America be America again—*

*The land that never has been yet—*

*And yet must be—the land where every man is free.*

*The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—*

*Who made America,*

*Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,*

*Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,*

*Must bring back our mighty dream again.*

*Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—*

*The steel of freedom does not stain.*

*From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,*

*We must take back our land again,*

*America!*

*Excerpt from [Langston Hughes' Poem: Let America Be America Again](#)*