June 5 2020

OCDLA joins in the outrage and condemnation of the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and so many other lives lost because of deeply engrained racism. We mourn the killings of Black Portlanders Kendra James, Aaron Campbell, and Quanice Hayes, and the targeting of and attack on Michael Fesser. OCDLA stands with all those who have suffered police brutality and police misconduct.

As defense attorneys, juvenile attorneys, investigators and experts, we bear witness to the effects systemic racism has on Black people and communities of color. We see the driving force of racial bias in the pretextual traffic stops and disparities of subsequent searches of our clients of color. We know how racism influences law enforcement’s investigation of crimes. We know that Black people are disproportionally arrested, charged, convicted, and sentenced because the criminal justice system was designed to harm Black lives.

We justice-driven lawyers call on our elected officials, local leaders, and community organizations to rise up, take a stand, and enact legislation in order to dismantle systemic racism. We join in solidarity with those calling for immediate reform of police practices. We should work towards defunding and de-militarizing law enforcement. And we must go further. When police are wearing body cameras, they must be turned on and not covered up. We demand transparency of police disciplinary records. The over-policing of communities of color must end.

OCDLA looks forward to working with our legislators to enact legislation to increase police accountability and transparency in officer-involved shootings and violent incidents.

We are defenders fighting abusive police power. It is an honor and our duty to stand with and protect the lives of marginalized people. To our Black community members, we will continue to speak truth to power and pledge to continue the fight for justice. We stand with you.