



## Swift and Direct Action Needed To Combat White Supremacy

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**June 2, 2020** – New Jersey Policy Perspective was formed, and operates, to develop and promote public policies that reduce disparities, eliminate trauma, and build healthy communities. To be fully successful and accountable to the history of our country, this requires an anti-racist stance that does not shy away from the ways in which public policies over the years have erected barriers to success for Black and brown people in communities all across our state. Policies like redlining, the War on Drugs, unequal investments in education, and gentrification that plunders communities of color have left our society rife with inequities and vulnerable to disaster.

New Jersey is among the wealthiest and most diverse states in this nation, yet we suffer from some of the worst instances of residential and educational segregation and witness racial wealth disparities that should embarrass every one of us. The median net worth for a white family in the United States is \$171,000. For the median Black family, it is \$17,150. [That is not a typo. it is a tragedy.](#) Research from New Jersey-based organizations shows [it is likely far worse here.](#)

Far too many Black and brown New Jerseyans face barriers to success that prevent them from pursuing lives of good health, safety, and joy. This is no accident. These barriers have arisen through centuries of institutionalized racism, bigotry, and hatred. They are destructive trends that undermine our collective welfare and damage our economy, and they are the result of explicit policy choices.

Many state and local leaders have expressed concern and solidarity with those calling for justice in the wake of the most recent spate of racist killings that violently took the lives of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and countless others. It would be irresponsible to ignore the ways in which their deaths are tied to policies that enable over-policing and racist vigilantism. The best way for our leaders to show their support of calls for justice is to overwhelm their words with swift and direct action by implementing policies that address structural inequities and dismantle white supremacy. Such policies have been advanced for decades by dozens of organizations and thousands of people in every corner of New Jersey. Such policies include:

- [Equitable state and local budgets](#) that require the wealthy to pay their fair share and fully fund crucial investments in such building blocks of a healthy economy as quality education, reliable and accessible transportation, and safe, affordable places to live;
- [Closing youth prisons](#) that disproportionately jail children of color;
- [Creating and enabling civilian police review boards](#) in every community;
- [Ending the prohibition of cannabis](#) and the militarized War on Drugs;
- [Expanding access to quality health care](#), especially for children and [people who can become pregnant](#), regardless of their immigration status;
- [Eliminating exclusionary zoning ordinances](#) that effectuate redlining and fuel racist residential and [educational segregation](#);
- [Improving the health of our democracy](#) by expanding the right to vote and reducing the influence of money in elections.

Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., residents of cities across the country rebelled. Just seven days later, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed into law. It would be a show of good faith for lawmakers to implement these policies swiftly, so that New Jerseyans can be sure their expressions of solidarity and cries for justice are not simply hollow words. For it is only when such words are matched by clear and aggressive action that we will be able to rest with the comfort that our elected leaders have the best interests of all of our communities at heart and truly share our yearning for a more just and equitable state.

To put it lightly, the stakes are enormously high. We awakened today to a country where the President of the United States and his administration directed police forces to deploy tear gas on peaceful protesters, so that he could secure a photo-op at a church where he does not pray. We awakened to a country where journalists are harassed and arrested for documenting civil rights demonstrations and systemic instances of police brutality. We awakened to a country where the stench of racial injustice and callous lack of concern for Black lives have wrought violence and chaos for far too long. These disasters are not foreign. They are in the bedrock of our society—and New Jersey must take the opportunity to actively root them out once and for all. For if we do not, we will never secure a society full of health, joy, and love where all of our children can thrive. #BlackLivesMatter

Signed,

Brandon McKoy, President

On behalf of the New Jersey Policy Perspective staff and Board of Trustees