

Statement Against Injustice and in Support of Black Lives

Discrimination, racism and police brutality have no place in a free society. The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans prove there's still much wrong in our world. Now is the time to protest against a system that breeds injustice and the senseless taking of human life. We must all work together towards much needed change.

Our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temples and members in the United States are no strangers to discrimination and racism. Founded by Japanese immigrants more than a hundred years ago, our temples were vandalized, burned and shuttered during World War II. Many Japanese Americans were arrested and incarcerated without due process of law, solely based on their ethnicity. Entire communities—grandparents, adults, and children—were forced to abandoned homes and sent to concentration camps.

These actions were especially unjust because they were Americans, denied their civil rights and liberties as U.S. citizens. Today it's a sad fact that Black Americans still face ongoing systemic discrimination, racism and brutality. It's time for change.

The Buddhist teachings encourage us to hold all life as precious. Moreover, we all are interconnected and inter-dependent, so it's important to recognize these truths and try to work together and live in harmony. These are not merely sweet words without substance; they represent true reality. We must see them in our lives here and now. We must try to live in accord with these truths in our communities, in our country, and in our world at large.

However Buddhism also teaches us the greatest impediments to peace within ourselves and in the world are greed, anger and ignorance. We naturally are attached to our own views and strongly tend to be selfish and self-centered. We all must break through this cloud of ignorance to see the greater good.

Shinran Shōnin, founder of Jodo Shinshu, welcomed all who wanted to hear the Buddhist teachings. He treated everyone equally, calling them “fellow travelers.” With this attitude, we also are encouraged to see others as equals, to be helpful, and to support people in need.

In this spirit, let us strive for a more equitable and just society. Let us try to see ignorance and selfishness within our selves, to speak out against discrimination, injustice, and brutality, and to work together to create a more peaceful and harmonious world.

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