



A Statement from the Illinois Association of the Deaf Executive Board

The Illinois Association of the Deaf vehemently denounces any form of social, systematic, institutionalized, or internalized racial oppression.

The circumstances surrounding George Floyd's death are not isolated, they are the latest of a long string of oppression and racism towards Black individuals.

Our hearts are heavy due to the latest events, including the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many other Black victims. Not only for the family and friends of those murdered, but for Black community members who continue to face emotional, mental and physical anguish.

While we are currently facing a healthcare crisis with the coronavirus pandemic, there has been another crisis far more serious that has been affecting America and, more specifically, Black Americans, for far longer: the bigotry, oppression, prejudice, racism and unequal treatment of Black individuals.

In our own Deaf community, we've seen said grievances against Black Deaf individuals and groups by white individuals, both hearing and Deaf, who are either aware or unaware of their white privilege and bias towards Black Deaf Americans.

On a broader scale, not only does justice need to be served in George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and other victims' names, this hate must stop. On a fundamental level, because oppression and racism towards Black individuals is a Black civil rights issue, as well as a human rights issue, we are gravely concerned.

To this end, the unconscionable statements made by our president regarding George Floyd's death and the subsequent protests further spew hate. These statements are deplorable, maddening and sickening. Changes must be made from the top down, from the executive branch all the way to local jurisdictions, in the treatment of Black individuals.

One should never be subjected to oppression and racism.

As we strongly posit that leading advocacy organizations of Black Deaf and hard of hearing individuals must be at the forefront of the dialogue, we stand with and behind the Chicagoland Black Deaf Advocates in addressing the social, health, and civil rights for Black individuals within the Deaf community. We also call other state associations of the Deaf, as well as the National Association of the Deaf, to partner with the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) and its 30+ chapters across the country to protect the civil rights of Black Deaf and hard of hearing Americans.

In solidarity,

The Illinois Association of the Deaf Executive Board

Corey Axelrod, President
Suzanna Laskowski, Vice President
Darci Zook, Secretary
Tom Bruhn, Membership Secretary