Hawai’i People’s Fund stands in solidarity with those rejecting the continued systemic violence against our Black brothers and sisters ~ in the streets, in our work, and in our homes ~ and are committed to lifting up efforts that demand a collective shift towards a peaceful and equitable world.

Peaceful demonstrations against systemic racism and police brutality have been met with grotesque irony by escalating violence against protestors in cities across the Continent, underscoring the need for a complete overhaul of existing criminal justice and law enforcement structures.

The recorded murder of George Floyd captured not only his last breaths being taken by Minneapolis police. The recording captured the deep sense of helplessness in the face of the ensuing violence against people’s bodies. To watch a brother have his last breaths stolen and to feel powerless to stop it unveils the deep injuries that such repeated violation of constitutional rights has inflicted upon entire communities.

George Floyd’s recorded murder illuminates the inconsistencies that have long existed in this country regarding who deserves to be included in the promise of a safe, free society. This deep divide is the brokenness we seek to heal together.

The inextricable link between Black Liberation and justice for Indigenous peoples positions us wholeheartedly to reject continued efforts to erase, subdue, and silence BIPOC communities. We are brothers and sisters in our struggles, as the systemic violence and racism designed to marginalize both of our communities remains at the heart of injustice.

It does something to your sense of humanity when you watch someone take another person’s life. Further, waking up knowing that the last time someone was killed because of the color of their skin was not the last time someone would be killed because of the color of their skin. And when that skin looks like your skin, it does something to your sense of self, regardless of where you are and how safe you thought you were when you
went to bed the night before. It leaves you feeling uncertain about where
you can travel and with whom and at what time and doing what activity.
Your daily experience becomes increasingly assaulted by the power of the
ignorance and apathy of others. And when you realize that you
CANNOT on your own combat this NATION-WIDE, CENTURIES OLD
disposition, you feel a little less human than you may have felt when you
began the day.

Sadly, this dispossession of humanity is not new to BIPOC
communities. The idea that after centuries of sowing seeds of indifference
toward BIPOC communities, that America, as a nation would harvest
anything other than what this country allowed to take root, even watered
and cultivated, is absurd.

Still, I retain my humanity, because I know I am not combating this alone.
I know that as I stand, the members of the HPF Board, our supporters, and
our beloved grantees stand in solidarity with me. As we stand, I am
reminded that grassroots movements, real, from the ground up, from the
people up movements, have for decades been sowing different seeds. Over
the years, these seeds have been sprouting, and growing, and refusing to
be uprooted. James Baldwin’s words capture this necessary paradigm
shift well when he shared: “You have to decide who you are and force the
world to deal with you, not with its idea of you.”

I am grateful to be a part of an organization that has decided who we are.

~ Rachel James,
HPF Board of Directors
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