

Sen. Susan M. Collins
George Floyd statement
June 1, 2020

Mr. President, I rise today at a time of great sorrow, anger, and fear for our nation. We face the confluence of a health crisis, an economic depression, and a killing that laid bare the racial injustice that still taints our country. The horrific death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was reprehensible. It was beyond a tragedy; it was a crime.

As Americans, we all need to frankly acknowledge and work to resolve our longstanding, ongoing struggles with racial inequality. The President should help to heal the racial divisions in this country. It is at times like this that a President needs to speak to the nation, to pledge to right wrongs, and to calm inflamed passions.

The right to gather in protest of injustice is enshrined in our Constitution. The desire for reconciliation is in our national character.

We must join together to ensure that the legacy of George Floyd is of progress, not deepening division and hatred.

Let me be clear, the vast majority of law-enforcement officers are brave men and women devoted to protecting our families, our belongings, and our communities. They deserve our heartfelt gratitude as they willingly risk their lives for ours when danger strikes. In Maine, we are fortunate to have so many terrific professional law enforcement officers, devoted to their duty, devoted to doing what is right.

It is, however, imperative that we examine and act on the racial disparities in law enforcement where they occur. I cannot believe that George Floyd would have had his neck stepped on and the life squeezed out of him had he been white. There are many other examples as well, sadly. I remember Senator Tim Scott describing his being stopped by a police officer while driving many times during one year even though he was abiding by all traffic laws. That is harassment and simply wrong.

In confronting these problems, we would do well to heed the words of Congressman Lewis in response to the violence that overwhelmed peaceful protests in his city of Atlanta last weekend. And of course, we all know that the Congressman is a civil rights icon as well as an extraordinary Member of Congress. He said this: "Justice has, indeed, been denied for far too long. Rioting, looting, and burning is not the way. Organize. Demonstrate. Sit-in. Stand-up. Vote. Be constructive, not destructive. History has proven time and again that non-violent, peaceful protest is the way to achieve the justice and equality that we all deserve."

Those are powerful words from Congressman Lewis. Those are words that should motivate and guide all of us.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Mr. President, by continuing to listen to

one another and be guided by the words of Congressman Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King, and the Mayor of Atlanta, we can work toward improving social justice and eliminating racial disparities in this country; we can drive out the forces of bigotry.

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