

# SPECIAL Director's Message



## Oregon Housing and Community Services

June 3, 2020

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

I write with a heavy heart.

George Floyd should be alive. Say his name. A 46-year-old Black father whose life was senselessly extinguished at the hands of law enforcement. The pain and grief and frustration is palpable. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Talyor, Tony McDade – names added this year to the list of unhealed losses. Today we pause to remember their names but this moment asks more of us:

These recent examples of systemic disregard for Black people, while not new, have been both appalling and devastating. We recommit to anti-racism work and echo the calls for an end to police brutality. At the same time, in order to disrupt entrenched systems that perpetuate racial inequality, we at OHCS must do the work of “getting our own house in order.” Transformative systems change requires truth telling and accountability.

Structural racism and police violence are deeply intertwined. Housing Finance Agencies have historically contributed to a series of seemingly “blameless” widespread practices that entrench modern-day inequality and set the stage for a widening racial wealth gap and negative social determinants of health for communities of color. Highly policed neighborhoods are frequently located alongside a tangled web of invisible structural processes often rooted in “de jure” and “de facto” practices of red-lining, urban renewal, restrictive covenants, biased mortgage lending and chronic disinvestment.

State Housing Finance Agencies were created to advance housing opportunities for all but for too long have not lived up to that vision. Advancing our leading priority and guiding principal of equity and racial justice within our agency and across the state of Oregon requires us to acknowledge this dark history. In doing so, we work to avoid repeating it. Today, as we take proactive steps towards change and healing I hope you will join me in recommitting to



combat white supremacy and to dismantling structural racism. This is essential work. As we move forward we will continue listening to Black, Indigenous and other people of color and joining together to support fierce struggles for equity and justice.

Our thoughts are with George Floyd's family, community and all those impacted by anti-Black assaults at the hands of police. Calls for change have been echoed around the country and around the world. We are inspired by the display of humanity and we will continue to stand up publicly for equity and racial justice. OHCS affirms our support for Black, Brown and Indigenous people in OHCS and in the diverse communities we serve. We join our partners in expressing collective anguish and a renewed commitment to the work ahead. All Oregonians should live free from systemic violence and bigotry while having opportunity to pursue prosperity and live free from poverty. This work moves forward with us, with you, right now.

Sincerely,



Margaret Solle Salazar, Executive Director

