



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Call to Action in Response to Killings of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On the heels of a series of injustices against African-Americans in this country—most recently the unprovoked shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, the weaponization of race to threaten the life and well-being of Christian Cooper, as well as the senseless deaths at the hands of the police of George Floyd in Minnesota, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, and Atatiana Jefferson, Michael Ramos, and Antronie Scott right here in Texas—those imbued with knowledge and steadied by courage must now act. Therefore, in its continuing effort to promote positive change, the African-American Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Texas (“AALS”) is issuing this Call to Action to attorneys to be not only advocates for the rule of law, but agents of change.

As such, the AALS reaffirms the sworn commitment of its members to ensure the protections granted to all citizens pursuant to the U.S. Constitution—specifically the right to peaceably assemble and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. The AALS recognizes the underlying frustrations of many that have led to violence by some and in no way condones such actions. As Dr. King stated, “a riot is the language of the unheard.” Narrow restrictions by government and police officials can be placed on the exercise of free speech; however, people have the right to be heard.

Accordingly, the AALS calls for our members and other attorneys throughout the state and country to use their knowledge of the law and resources to assist citizens in being heard and in safeguarding the rights of citizens within the confines of the law. This Call to Action includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Denouncing the marginalization of minorities (specifically African-Americans) as well as other minority communities;
2. Promoting properly funded cultural/diversity and implicit bias training for law enforcement;
3. Holding seminars that provide information on how to peaceably assemble;
4. Encouraging video and written documentation during demonstrations;
5. Creating a list of local bail bondsmen and criminal defense and civil rights attorneys available for public use, including informing citizens of the existence of public defenders’ offices;
6. Encouraging the organization of local “Citizen Review Boards”;
7. Supporting reform legislation criminalizing the false reporting of crimes; and
8. Encouraging the completion of the 2020 Census to ensure that people are counted and ensuring people are registered to vote.

There comes a time when people of good will and good intention must rise, unite, articulate, and act. That time is now. The AALS asks that you join us in ascribing true meaning to the oath of our members and the Constitution of this nation. Founded in 1992, the mission of the AALS is to promote the objectives of the State Bar of Texas as they relate to African-American lawyers. The opinions expressed herein are those of the AALS and are not the position of the State Bar of Texas.

Signed,

African-American Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Texas, 2019-2020 Council