



*Three weeks ago, we lost George Floyd due to a violent altercation with police. Seven days ago, it happened again with Rayshard Brooks. Both instances sent shockwaves through our nation - through our local community.*

*I have sat down to write a statement in response to these unnecessary deaths many times over the last few weeks, but nothing I wrote seemed sufficient to capture the sadness, the disappointment, and feelings of hopelessness. I struggled to make the words sound less than hollow or shallow.*

*But here is what I know:*

*When we lose our Black and Brown men and women to violence it should affect us all. The Black Lives Matter movement, which has been re-energized in recent weeks, has shown us that we must all be a part of the fight. We are all obligated to do more than just simply witness this injustice and then go on with our day. We must take the time to acknowledge the problem we, as a nation, face and realize that it runs deep. We must recognize that injustice comes from a long history of valuing people of color as "less than". It creates a power dynamic that reinforces systems of oppression.*

*When I think of KLF's place in the community, I understand that charity work is created to do something good for a community. We want to ensure that individuals and families have the food they need to lead a healthy active life. However, we can, actively or passively, slip into the habit of treating those we serve as if they have some sort of deficit. It can flow from the premise that the giver has the expertise to decide both what the community needs and how to provide it. At its worst, charitable organizations are only accountable to themselves and their donors. If we approach our work as a "us" vs "them"- with sympathy instead of empathy - we will continue to be a part of the problem.*

*So, at the KLF Board Meeting on June 17th, it was decided to form a committee of the Board - made up of Board members, volunteers, and community members to review our programs, policies, and statements and to ensure that our work is approached equitably and inclusively. Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes is committing to stepping up and doing the hard work. We commit to listening in a way that recognizes the complex challenges and opportunities. We commit to training our Board, staff and volunteers so that we know better and do better. We are willing to be vulnerable, expose our "good intentions" and turn it into work that dismantles the systemic racist machine and builds a more equitable future.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer E. Johnson".

Jennifer E. Johnson  
Executive Director  
Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes