

Statement of Intense and Profound Love

As a homeless service provider in Albuquerque, we see very intimately what happens when a community, comprised of individual members, each with independent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, knowingly (and sometimes not) remain complacent in its obligation to help individuals and families without homes. This complacency is very dangerous. It allows a stasis to set in, and the momentum of one's own comfort and privilege quickly follow. Though we typically associate momentum with advancement, in this case "momentum complacency" actually strengthens the very systems and structures that lead to homelessness. It feels good not to do or feel anything. And every day, we need a little bit more and more, to keep us going.

You know the systems and structures. Wage inequality, housing discrimination, lack of affordable housing, criminalization of the poor, to name a few. All overwhelmingly affect BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). The trend is alarming, but one that we are all a part of. A system, and its formative structure, is only as strong as the people who choose not to do anything about it.

The process of "unknowing" isn't blameless. We can no longer fall back on the mantra, "We didn't know," which is harmful and devastating to BIPOC, whose livelihoods are splintered and diminished day after day after day because people don't want to know what they should have known: what they should have sought inside and out to uncover. We all need to rock the boat a little. Disrupt this momentum of comfort and privilege. Not feel good sometimes.

The truth is, we have failed. We have failed our Black communities, our Native communities, our Hispanic communities. And the longer homelessness remains, we will continue to fail.

The pandemic has not only disproportionately rooted itself in our Black, Native, and Hispanic communities, but so has homelessness. Homelessness is something that we have accepted: that we accept and allow to fester because deep down, so many don't believe all of us deserve a home, and the right to a life of promise and hope.

We can say that homelessness is a community problem because it feels manageable and uncontroversial to say that, but the truth is that homelessness is a byproduct of racism. And working toward its solution is integral to any anti-racism efforts we may commit to. We do this work because we have to. It is part of our skin and entrenched in the color that many of us undeservedly suffer for.

We must believe that Black Lives Matter if we want to begin dismantling this system, one person at a time. We must believe that systems of poverty and oppression – again disproportionately affecting Blacks and other minorities – are inherently racist by design, and we must work, as in the words of Ibram X. Kendi, to be "anti-racist," because the alternative is adhering to foundations of power and privilege that are killing people—the very people we are trying to serve.

On behalf of HopeWorks, we must do more than offer shelter, mental/behavioral health, employment and housing. We must commit to a movement of change, beginning with our own hearts and our own minds. This internal, painful work has already begun, but there is still much to do, and much to learn.

In the recent weeks, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many of our Black brothers and sisters, have pierced our hearts, leaving in its place scar tissue. This tissue will always serve as a reminder that we must never give up hope, and we must never give up on each other. When we feel ourselves slipping into complacency – or worse, apathy – this scar's twinge will remind us, once again, of our duty and our calling. We cannot sit idly while people are dying on the streets – whether murdered in plain sight or left to die because of a community that will not embrace them.

In *I Am Not Your Negro*, James Baldwin writes, "We are cruelly trapped between what we would like to be and what we actually are. And we cannot possibly become what we would like to be until we are willing to ask ourselves just why the lives we lead on this continent are mainly so empty, so tame, and so ugly."

It is with humility that we release this statement to you: an expression of our intense and profound love for this movement. To commit to working unflinchingly toward ending racism, exclusion, and oppression. To commit to unselfishly combating emptiness, fragility, and ugliness. That is the only real way to end the systemic causes of homelessness.

In the coming days, we intend to strategically incorporate this work into our mission, and we look forward to keeping you informed of our progress. The time is now. Will you join us?



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To learn about how you can help, please visit our website at hopeworksnm.org.