

ANTI- RACISM WORK AT ELIOT

CALL TO ACTION TO THE CONGREGATION AND FRIENDS OF ELIOT CHURCH

Elizabeth Baker, Margaret Battat, Josephine McNeil, Rebekah Mitsein, Pete November, and Marge O'Reilly volunteered at the Eliot Annual Meeting on June 7, 2020, to take part in a conversation on racial justice matters in Newton. Out of this conversation, we have produced this document for the congregation's consideration:

The police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade, and the lynching of Ahmaud Arbery are only the most recent examples of the deep systemic and institutional racism that has pervaded the police forces and legal system of this country for hundreds of years. Some of us are seeing the breadth and depth of this legacy for the first time. Some of us believed we understood it but are now being asked to reckon with the ways we have been complicit in and complacent about white supremacy despite our best intentions.

This reckoning means understanding that the police brutality, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy we're seeing amplified on a national scale through public outcry often goes unremarked upon in our own community. On May 20th, Tim Duncan, a Newton resident and former Deputy Athletic Director at Northeastern, was walking to the grocery store with his wife when he was racially profiled by the Newton police. They wrongfully identified Duncan as a suspect connected with a recent murder in Dorchester based only on the fact that he is tall and Black. The Boston Globe reports,

Four police cruisers descended on Duncan and his wife. One of the five officers drew his gun. Another asked for Duncan's identification. Duncan knew better than to reach into his pocket. The fates of Amadou Diallo — shot 41 times after New York City police mistook his wallet for a gun — and countless others killed as they tried to comply with orders have informed a code of conduct for Black men dealing with police in fraught situations, he said.

The Newton Police department did not offer an apology to Duncan—or even register the occurrence in the police logs as anything other than an unspecified “incident”—until he went public with his story. He did so because he wanted his children and student-athletes “to know

that this can literally happen to anyone on a safe street in one of the most liberal cities in the most liberal states in the country. It still can happen and it did happen to a person they know.”

This story would never have come to light had Duncan not felt the pressing necessity to share it in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. The account is powerful in its specificity, but what it represents is commonplace. It reminds us that such occurrences are not exceptional, unfortunate events but normalized experiences for Black men and women in this country, even in, as Duncan says, “one of the most liberal cities in the most liberal states in the country.”

Educating ourselves about systemic racism and police misconduct in Newton is an important first step to doing right by this community where we reside and worship, but that does not on its own lead to systemic change. Concrete action and accountability are required before our social realities can start to match up with our ideals and values.

How to Take Local Action:

Attend the weekly protests in Newton Corner which have been organized by two local 9-year-old girls:

They have organized a Black Lives Matter peaceful protest to be held from 5:30-6 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays along Tremont Street between Park and Waverly. By asking people to wear masks, they have been able to maintain the proper distance between attendees. They are also asking people to bring a sign.

Learn more about what it means to “Defund the Police”:

You may have heard or seen the phrase “defund the police” on protest signs, in the news, and on social media. Most initiatives calling for police defunding are not suggesting police departments be dissolved entirely. “Defund the police” is a call for a concerted effort to move resources from police departments to community-driven services and to social services—like social workers and school counselors—who are better equipped to deal with many of the issues to which police are called to respond. Initiatives to defund the police particularly challenge the necessity of line items in police budgets that contribute to the militarization of the police in this country—expensive and unnecessary combat equipment, assault rifles, submachine guns, firearm simulators, and tear gas, for example.

Sign a [change.org](https://www.change.org/p/newton-police-budget-reduction) petition calling for Newton to decrease the police budget by at least 10% and pour that money into other social services and community-driven solutions:

<https://tinyurl.com/ya2tjexm>

More information about the group behind this petition can be found here in this article from Patch.com: <https://tinyurl.com/yb7wtpvp>

Contact your city councilor directly and thank them for voting to reduce the police budget by \$200,000 on Thursday evening:

You can find your city councilor and their contact information here: <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/aldermen/boalisting/default.asp>

Petition Newton's Mayor, Ruth Ann Fuller, and the Newton City Council to take action now in this moment:

Ask the Mayor to approve the \$200,000 budget cut that the City Council voted for. She will be giving an address on Monday, June 15th at 6:00 on these issues. You can hear her address by tuning in to NewTV's Government Channel (Comcast 9, RCN 13, 614 (HD), and Verizon 33) or on your computer or cell phone through Vimeo by clicking on <https://vimeo.com/428638008>.

Support Josephine McNeil in calling for transparency and for a systematic review of racial bias in Newton's governance and operations. Her full letter, in brief, calls are for:

1. Independent review of Tim Duncan incident: The immediate step in addressing the issue of transparency is to commission an independent review of the circumstances surrounding the racial profiling of Tim Duncan. All of the citizens of Newton, especially those who are Black, deserve to know the truth.
2. Racial equity assessment of Newton institutions: During this time of budget review, the Mayor or City Council members, or both, must recommend and approve a line item to hire a firm or individual, preferably one led by a person of color, to conduct a study of all the institutions in the city. These institutions should be assessed through a "racial equity" lens to determine the extent to which they take into consideration the impact of their actions upon communities of color—and specifically Blacks. To adhere to this call for transparency, the findings and recommendations of the study must be made public so that solutions can be put in place.

How to Take National Action:

Call your Congressional representative and ask that person to support the Justice in Policing Act of 2020 that has just been introduced in the House:

Even if you think your Representative is supporting the Bill, it is important to let her/him know there is constituent support. The number to call is 202-224-3121.

You can educate yourself about this legislation by watching a webinar from the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDGgPH9LT4A&feature=youtu.be>) This Civil Rights and Criminal Justice organization was created at the request of John F. Kennedy in 1963. It can always use donations.

Donate to organizations that are challenging illegal actions by police and other government agencies:

These include the ACLU (<https://www.aclu.org/issues/racial-justice>) and the National Lawyers' Guild (<https://www.nlg.org/>) Another organization that you might consider making a donation to is the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) who works on major impact cases that end up before the Supreme Court. Thurgood Marshall was one of the LDF attorneys on the Brown vs. Board of Education case that outlawed the "separate but equal" education doctrine which was struck down by the Supreme Court and opened the door to integrated schools. www.ldf.org.

Donate to organizations that provide bail money for protestors arrested at the demonstrations in Minneapolis: (<https://minnesotafreedomfund.org/>)

Donate to the Funds for Victims of Police Brutality:

[Breonna Taylor](#)

[George Floyd Memorial Fund](#)

[Justice for Mychael Johnson](#)

[Justice for Jamee](#)

[Destany Harris Memorial](#)

[Justice for Eric Rosallia](#)

[Justice for Dion Johnson](#)

[Fund for Tony McDade](#)

[Fund for Darnella Frazier who filmed George Floyd's murder](#)

[Fund for James Scurlock](#)