

Washtenaw County Government and Law Enforcement Leaders Join Sherriff Jerry L. Clayton and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell in Response to the George Floyd Murder Conviction of Derek Chauvin.

The verdict in the Derek Chauvin Case is in. He has been found guilty of murdering George Floyd. We believe that people of good will have been praying that justice would be done and hoping that this tragedy will be a turning point for this country and Washtenaw County. This verdict will not bring Mr. Floyd back to his family, but it does bring some form of accountability. It recognizes that no one is above the law, that police should serve and protect all of us, regardless of the color of our skin or our station in life. But, the murder of George Floyd, is not just an isolated incident. It is part of a pattern of racial injustice that permeates our society. Policing must do better. This country must do better. As part of the much-needed self-examination to move us forward to a more just society, we must be honest with ourselves and each other. We must acknowledge the decades of racism and discrimination towards African Americans and other people of color in the name of justice. Now is the time for a thoughtful and courageous re-imagining of the policing profession and the larger criminal legal system.

This does not mean that all police are bad or that the work police do is not honorable. Many police professionals in this county and nationwide are willing to sacrifice themselves for strangers, in order to keep others safe. However, it does mean that the communities and people we serve must have a voice in how that service is provided. It means that all people are entitled to equal and respectful service and protection under the law. We must make the changes that are necessary in police service agencies so that respect for and recognition of the sanctity of all human life is their highest priority. No one should be afraid to interact with the police because of the color of their skin.

Let us all come together to make sure that true systemic change happens. Policing must change. There must be no more George Floyds who die needlessly, or Derek Chauvins who violate the law, their sworn oath of office, their duty to protect, and the principles of fundamental decency. We support the outcome of this case and hope it serves as a turning point. As we continue our work to make this county more just and equitable, we must not focus only on policing. We must work intentionally to change hearts, minds, culture, and institutional structures. This is a time to renew our commitment to racial justice throughout this country and here in Washtenaw County.