



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Statement on Nationwide Protests

by Hon. Teta V. Banks, Ed.D.
Chair, National Council
United Nations Association of the USA
Member, World Federation of UNAs

The United Nations Association of the United States of America extends our condolences to the family of George Floyd and all other victims of racial violence. As we advocate for human rights, we condemn those who deny those rights to any men and women - in this case, to men and women and children based upon the color of their skin. The protests, demonstrations, and riots we now see in the streets of our nation are demands for justice and change. The cry, once again, is “No justice, No peace.” While we advocate for civic action, we know that violence begets violence. However, we also know, as Dr. King stated that “violence is the language of the unheard.” And we know that the struggle for civil rights in America has continued into the 21st century.

In the midst of the year in which we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Charter, we find ourselves in mourning and in outrage at a convergence of pandemics- the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic of racism. While we were yet in “shut down” as a country and as a world due to the novel coronavirus, the ever-present pandemic of racism ignited again the smoldering embers of 400 years with the murder of an African American man, George Floyd, by law enforcement in Minneapolis. The anger, frustration, and pain lay bare the soul of America’s original sin of slavery and its centuries-old aftermath. The convergence of this social cancer with the COVID-19 that has killed over 100,000 Americans, with a disproportionate number of African Americans, bears witness to the social disparities that now translate into medical vulnerabilities and precious lives lost.

Our reality is a conundrum far beyond a Dickensian dualism.

In the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic with over 100,000 Americans dead and more than 3 million people dead worldwide, in the midst of CDC and NIH reports as well as African American scholars noting and explaining the impact disparities of the novel coronavirus on populations of people of color based on historically continuous systemic inequalities, in the midst of a fabricated friction attacking the World Health Organization, in the midst of a continuum litany of African American individuals’ deaths/murders at the hands of a nation’s law enforcement (individually and collectively) , and now in the midst of demonstrations, protests, and violence in our cities throughout our nation, we find ourselves forced to see “more clearly” and see ”anew” the realities that are our America.

And we see this reality in a dichotomous lens. Our nation is touting the great step into space once more since a decade with the SpaceX venture to the International Space Station via public-private Tesla-NASA partnership, the United Nations is commemorating its 75th anniversary after its Charter that proclaims never again the “scourge of war” for succeeding generations with the commitment to protect human rights in that historic Universal Declaration of Human Rights document, nations throughout the world are in the midst of strategizing and implementing the Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals that address every element that impacts sustenance of human life and our planet .

We are forced to see more clearly the good, the bad and the ugly. But we have seen this before. Yet, today with the “urgency of now” we must not only see but act. We must not only advocate but commit. We must not only be a voice but be a vehicle of change. Gandhi told us, “Be the change you want to see.”

How each of us chooses to be the change will be our decisions. For our UNA members, we can choose the ballot, we can choose the advocacy actions, we can choose education. We can choose to march, to teach, to speak the truth to power, to pen the ideas of change, to be social change agents. Whatever the means, we refuse to be the “unheard.” Individually and collectively we, as UNA, have a charge to keep. That charge is written into the very document creating the existence of the United Nations. It reads: *“We the Peoples of the United Nations determined... to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person...”*

In these times of conflict, in these wars, let us stand strong in the faith of our founding document. Let us not waver nor falter in our commitment to human rights for all. Let us not be bowed nor bent to inhumane ideologies. Let us not fear to uphold the higher laws of humanity. Let us reaffirm that the UNA stands for human rights. We stand for justice. We stand for the future of humanity.
