Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform

Statement on Police Brutality

We honor and share the pain and anger of millions in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others by those who are duty-bound to protect and serve. These repeated tragedies have ignited a collective grief that is powerful and necessary. The trauma and disparities Black people face in our country in criminal justice practices, health care, housing, access to education, food, wages, environmental conditions, and so much more, are deeply unjust.

New York City is not exempt from this violence. At every stage of our criminal justice system, from the point of arrest to release, Black people have suffered abuse and many have died. From Eric Garner, to Kalief Browder, to Ronald Spear, to Layleen Polanco, to Leonard Carter, to name a few, the devaluation of Black lives in our criminal justice system is deep-seated. Plainly, it must end.

Our City and country must seize this moment to remake the relationship between law enforcement, the justice system, and communities of color, particularly Black communities, so long harmed and so often unheard. As a start, we need legislative and administrative policies to increase transparency and limit the scope of police interaction in situations where non-law enforcement responses are more appropriate. We need support and funding for community-based safety efforts, and to direct investments to communities most harmed by over-policing and over-incarceration.

We rededicate ourselves to ending a manifestation of racism and brutality in our city—Rikers Island—and more broadly to ending the racism that continues to profoundly harm Black and Brown communities. We further rededicate ourselves to supporting those communities' health and well-being. People of all races have to engage in this work. Together, we can expose and end the systemic inequalities, biases, and prejudices that prevent us from achieving equality and justice for all.