Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform

Statement on Verdict in the Murder of George Floyd

The guilty verdict in the murder of George Floyd provides a welcome measure of accountability, but we are far from achieving the ideal of equal justice. We are deeply troubled by the ever-growing roster of Black and Brown lives taken in civilian encounters with law enforcement.

Our collective safety, health, and well-being are inextricably bound, and damaged to the core by the scourge of racism. Our society needs transformational change.

We call anew for a reorientation of the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color, so long harmed by purposeful policies and actions. Now is the time for our elected leaders to invest deeply in the vibrancy of those communities. They must also fund community-based safety efforts, and limit the scope of police interaction when non-law enforcement responses are more appropriate.

In New York City, so many of the wrongs of our legal and law enforcement systems are embodied in the Rikers Island jails. Every current and future policymaker should pledge to close them as quickly as possible, and to remake the dysfunctional Department of Correction.

Only when all these goals have been achieved will our nation and our City begin to approach justice.

May the guilty verdict bring some solace to George Floyd’s family and all those seared by his murder. May George Floyd’s memory be a source of strength in the struggle ahead.