CitizenDetroit knows that many of our fellow Detroiters have first-hand experiences of police brutality both within and outside of the City of Detroit. Many of our participants, members of our team, and their families have experienced police brutality throughout their lives.

Throughout the last 50 years police community relations in Black communities have been deeply impacted by police brutality and police homicide in the US. And it was not so long ago that Detroit’s notorious STRESS unit of the early 1970’s murdered 24 people including 22 Black men.

Grassroots organizing led to the abolition of STRESS and the election of Detroit’s first black mayor, the Hon. Coleman A. Young, II. So, we know that change is possible through both protest and electoral activity.

CitizenDetroit works for Detroiters to have factual information so we can all make informed public policy and political decisions. One of our organizational values is that facts matter, and here are some facts: The country’s history of racist public policies have wreaked havoc on the lives of Black Americans. Historic connections between police departments and white supremacist organizations along with US government policies rooted in the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws have time and time again facilitated oppression and led to the brutalization and death of Black people and other people of color.

CitizenDetroit condemns the killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbrey, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Sean Reed and all of the Black people and people of color who have lost their lives to police brutality. We especially acknowledge the lives lost here in Detroit over the generations. We join the voices that are demanding justice, we stand with members of our community who are personally impacted by this violence and, given Detroit’s unique history with this kind of brutality, we extend our support to Detroiters who are struggling and retraumatized during this time. CitizenDetroit will continue to share with our community members information that helps us to analyze policy, participate in the political process, and use civic engagement to build a society that better reflects our democratic values. Everyone has a right to have a voice in our political system and to be effectively represented by it. Black Americans have a right to effective representation and those whose privilege afford them proper representation, the white Americans who carry political power and privilege in this country must join in demanding that effective representation for our communities. We commend those who are finding ways to take civic action and urge everyone to stay safe and healthy during
this difficult time. We commit to continuing to convene public discussion to review government systems, including the justice system, and policies that we can influence at the local, state and national level.

We press upon everyone the importance of voting. It’s an important election year and each of us can complete an application for an absentee ballot and vote in our upcoming elections on Tuesday August 4 and Tuesday November 3. A critical place where changes to policing policy will take place is at the local and state level where attorney generals, county sheriffs, prosecutors and judges are elected, chiefs of police are appointed by mayors, and state police are managed by governors. Let your voice be heard in the local races that lead and shape our communities.