

willow

Domestic Violence Center



September 8, 2020

Dear Friends:

Like many of you, we are feeling shock waves from the violence that has erupted in our community. When we learned that Daniel T. Prude's death was ruled a homicide by the County Medical Examiner, we felt profound sorrow and distress. We grieve with the Prude family and extend our deepest condolences.

Willow Domestic Violence Center has been deeply rooted in the Rochester community for decades. We are worried for this vibrant community we call home, where we aspire to be a community free from violence. We join in the chorus of Rochester voices advocating for transparency, accountability, and justice. We are deeply committed to nonviolence and a person-centered approach that runs deep in our work and our values. We feel strongly that our community can do better to eradicate violence from our daily lives by addressing the issues facing us directly, and through better collaboration and cooperation of the many public health and safety organizations in our region.

Everyone deserves to be safe. We all need to know, unequivocally, that our call to 911 in our time of need – whether a mental health crisis, a domestic violence incident or any reason at all – will be met with a compassionate response from officers who are sworn to serve and protect our community.

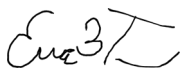
As an agency that partners closely with law enforcement *against violence*, we believe that our work will help us all move toward much-needed change in our community. It is precisely because of our strong and continued collaboration with law enforcement that we are standing in solidarity against the use of excessive police force and in support of the truth that Black Lives Matter. It is clear that as a community, we must improve our response to mental health needs.

At Willow, we are no strangers to mental health crises, and we are committed to treating everyone with respect, dignity and care. Our staff de-escalates tense situations on a regular basis. We see trauma every single day, and we fight to build resilience and healing in our community. What's happening in our community and around the country at this moment is all connected. We are facing multiple pandemics simultaneously: coronavirus, institutional and structural racism, and mental health and trauma at high levels.

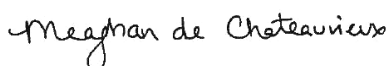
On Saturday, we sent a letter to Chief Singletary urging him to demonstrate his commitment to nonviolence and to seek justice and harmony at a moment when our community desperately needs it. For the last two nights, we have witnessed peaceful protests and we are buoyed by these strong steps toward our community coming together for much-needed change.

Today, we renew our commitment to nonviolence and antiracism actions within our work at Willow and throughout our community.

We must come together to root out racism in our lives, achieve equity and nurture a sense of belonging, dignity and respect for every member of our community.



Erica Tickle,
Board Chair



Meaghan de Chateaufieux,
President & CEO

