

## **Testimony to VT Legislators considering COVID-19 response**

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Here we are again. We are still here. Systems of racism and economic exploitation built this country including the Brave Little State of VT. The killing of black and brown people with no consequences, continues.

The issues you have been educated about and reports have been written about including from our Human Rights Commission and the Attorney Generals office state very clearly that systemic racism is a thing throughout ALL state systems. It is real, it exists here in VT. Systemic racism and the economic exploitation that is as American as apple pie and baseball causes suffering to vulnerable communities that have just been made even more vulnerable EVERY DAY!

It is time for action that moves beyond symbolic or “one off” gestures that create an appearance of caring and devotion to an issue that is not going away and by all measures is creating an even more alarming impact today.

It is time for you as public servants to commit to not approaching solutions the same way you always have that have resulted in little or no real, measurable, progress. In Burlington, time energy and city resources were just used to debate and ultimately remove an offensive mural. Why now? Why is it hard to understand that it was not a major priority before covid-19? What tangible impact did that make? The appearance of concern is not tangible. Why was it made a priority now in the middle of a pandemic? Did it get someone a job? Access to healthcare, food on the table? Housing or land? Money in someone’s pocket? The City was worried about getting sued though.... As you make your decisions, what are you worried about?

Results based accountability is a must as a starting place. In 6 months or a year what will you be able to point to as progress that you used your power and resources to affect?

While it is customary for me to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you, I am not able to do that today. I will certainly thank you in 6 months or a year if you have actually done something that is worthy of the positions, power and advantage you enjoy and actually lifts the most vulnerable up in a measurable, verifiable way. At that point, you will have served the purpose that you took an oath to uphold.

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