



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### VVA: Silence Is Not an Option!

**(Washington, D.C.)**—Vietnam Veterans of America condemns all racism and discrimination and stands in support of a society where the rights of all Americans are truly equal under the law. Silence is not an option.

In the ongoing post-Vietnam years, we were exposed to racism in its many ugly forms, unfortunately often related to interactions with the police. This led to some changes, not the least of which was the number of Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American veterans who joined America's Police Departments. Apparently, that was not enough. Sadly, this is evident in a 2017 study by Protect Our Defenders that shows racial disparities continue in discipline within the military justice system.

Thankfully, the proliferation of camera phones has allowed everyone to see how people of color are treated by police and the criminal justice system, who still harbor racial animosity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Racism continues to divide our nation and rob our descendants' futures. The unjustified death of Mr. George Floyd was not the first but hopefully it will be the last. Additionally, we are appalled at the misuse of legitimate protest as an opportunity to commit crimes and urge all levels of government (federal, state, and local) to identify the leaders of those groups, both right and left, and prosecute them.

We are also concerned about the lack of any rational and non-incendiary message from some of our political leaders. We are deeply disturbed at the thought of using the military to violate the Constitutional rights of America citizens. In the words of General James Mattis, USMC (Ret.), “(w)e must reject any thinking of our cities as ‘battlespace’ that our uniformed military is called upon to dominate.”

We must all work to make real change to our society. We take heart in the diversity of the marchers in favor of justice for Mr. George Floyd. While it is disheartening that these injustices continue, we take heart in the number of Americans who have come out to demand peaceful change. We are also supportive of those law enforcement officers who have shown support for the marchers.

