

Kansas Legal Services

A non-profit law firm and community education organization helping low and moderate income people in Kansas



www.kansaslegalservices.org

Kansas Legal Services Statement On Racial Justice, June, 2020

Lawyers, as gatekeepers of the justice system, have a special obligation to seek justice. This is part of the reason we have a moral obligation to condemn racism in all its forms, including the clear misconduct by the police officers who killed George Floyd.

At Kansas Legal Services, we spend every day pushing the justice system to recognize the humanity of some of the most vulnerable Kansans - many of them Black.

It is clear to us that systemic racism is a feature and not a defect of our institutions. As a country, we cannot escape our past. A Constitution that counted Black Americans as 3/5 of a whole person, 250 years of human chattel, 60 years of Jim Crow, 35 years of redlining, 30 years of a War on Drugs targeted on poor, minority communities. This is who we are, but it is not who we have to be.

We will dedicate our legal resources to forcing the arc of the moral universe closer to justice because Black Lives Matter. What will you do?

Many resources are available to better educate ourselves on these issues. Among those that most specifically apply to those in the legal community, may we suggest:

- View the film “Just Mercy.” It is available for free streaming through June.

Viewers can watch the movie on multiple platforms, including [YouTube](#), [Google Play](#) and [Amazon](#). This movie, based on a case handled by lawyer Brian Stevenson, tells the story of his attempts to overturn the wrongful conviction of Walter McMillian, a man who spent six years on death row. Confronting the racism in Monroeville, Alabama that led to this verdict provides an education on this issue that is most relevant today.

- Learn more about implicit bias and complete [an implicit bias assessment](#).

You can do that through resources available from [the American Bar Association](#) in a tool kit, based on the implicit bias assessments now hosted by Project Implicit, a collaboration of researchers interested in implicit social cognition and "hidden" biases.

- Do some reading in this area. Search out the term white privilege as a starting point. Read

or listen to people you don't regularly "hear," whether they be friends and family or others speaking in this community.

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