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## Black Lives Matter

*In the Virgin Islands, the U.S. mainland and around the world*

*June 5, 2020*

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) stands with community foundations across the United States in speaking out against police brutality, systemic racism, and historical and acute injustice facing the African American community and other communities of color.

From our vantage point here in the middle of the Caribbean Sea, for some of us, the events unfolding on the mainland may feel far away; but for others, our connection to the cause of human dignity, justice and equality resonates very close to home and heart. As Virgin Islanders we know that our own history is rooted in struggle and resilience.



We treasure the diversity of our island communities - racial, cultural and religious - and our history of celebrating our differences. Our geographic location in "America's Paradise" in some measure may shield us from some of the ugliness of the systemic racism that permeates America and its institutions, but we are clear that the lingering effects of slavery and colonialism still lurk in our community .



As we reflect on the senseless killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the many others in the Black and Brown communities who have been victims of pervasive injustice and trauma supported by institutional failures, we know that mere words are not enough. For generations, African Americans and other people of color have borne the burdens of a system and culture of injustice. We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and are resolute that change must occur now. We are determined to consider our own policies, practices and systems to ensure that we are and continue to be an institution of fairness and diversity for all.

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We know that making a statement is an important step, but not an endpoint. With this in mind, we are making a commitment to reinvigorate The Virtues Project™, a global grassroots initiative to inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life, sparking a global revolution of kindness, justice, and integrity in more than 100 countries. The Project defines virtues as “the essence of the human spirit and the content of our character.” The mission of The Virtues Project is to inspire people of all cultures to remember who we really are, what we aspire to be, and to live by our highest values. You can find a list of virtues here:

<https://virtuesproject.com/virtueslist.html> .

It is our hope that this small step will contribute to expanding our awareness, heightening our collective consciousness, and promoting a more compassionate and safer community for all who call the Virgin Islands home. We invite you to follow our progress on this initiative via our social media accounts and by [joining our email list](#) .



In recognition of our years-long focus on literacy and school readiness, we will also be curating a collection of books centered around diversity, equity, and inclusion to be

circulated via our [Little Free Library](#) Partnership. You can expect these books to be available in the coming weeks. In the meantime, we invite the public to share their own favorite titles in the units located across the Territory. We will also be reaching out to local authors to explore a project to contribute materials to communities across the United States.

As we stand with those calling for justice and reform on the mainland, we are especially thinking about the many members of the Virgin Islanders diaspora and for their safety and well-being.

During this difficult time we know that emotions are running high. While we may not all agree on the nuances and details of the situation at hand, we remain hopeful that our humanity will prevail and ultimately lead us to a place of greater understanding, compassion, and love in the spirit of promoting equity and justice for all people no matter their demographics or affiliations.

Dee Baecher-Brown  
*President*

George H.T. Dudley  
*Chairman of the Board*

*Photos: The "Freedom Statues" in St. John, St. Croix and St. Thomas  
Photo Credits and Special Thanks to Don Hebert*

#### **About the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands**

*Since 1990, the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) has been a catalyst for positive change in the Territory through initiatives committed to youth, learning, family support and the environment. With a professional staff and a volunteer Board of Directors composed of community leaders, CFVI is a trusted advocate and supporter of programs that ensure opportunity and sustainability for current and future generations. CFVI is a registered non-profit organization entirely supported by individual donors, grants, trusts, corporate donations and estate planning. For more information, visit [cfvi.net](http://cfvi.net).*