



Please find a joint letter from the QLaw Bar Association and QLaw Foundation to the political and law enforcement leaders of Seattle, King County, and Washington State.

June 4, 2020

To the Elected Leaders of the City of Seattle, King County, and the State of Washington:

QLaw Foundation of Washington promotes the dignity and respect of LGBTQ+ Washingtonians within the legal system through advocacy, education, and legal assistance. The QLaw Association serves as a voice of LGBTQ+ lawyers and other legal professionals in the state of Washington on issues relating to diversity and equality in the legal profession, in the courts, and under the law. Our work as direct legal services providers to Washington's LGBTQ+ communities brings us into intimate contact with the interpersonal and state-imposed violence that our communities experience every day as a function of white supremacist, straight supremacist, and cisgender supremacist systems.

We write today, on the fourth day of Pride month, to join our Black loved ones, family, friends, and neighbors in demanding that you use your positions of power, immediately, to make necessary change. We write today to honor our Black, Brown, and Indigenous elders who fought for our beloved LGBTQ+ communities to live free of police violence against our bodies

and gathering spaces. We write to honor our Black, Brown, and Indigenous elders lost to the racism, homophobia, and transphobia that fueled the AIDS epidemic and which now fuels the spread of COVID-19. We write to honor our Black, Brown, and Indigenous loved ones, our queer and trans communities, who have risen up in protest in the last several days.

As our elected leaders, as the people charged by our democracy with the responsibility to protect the safety of our communities and equal application of the laws of the United States, the State of Washington, and the City of Seattle, you have failed all of us. You have allowed Seattle Police Department, Washington State Patrol, and other law enforcement agencies to commit acts of aggression and abject, abhorrent violence against protesters, journalists, youth, elders, with little to no provocation. We could not reiterate every incident we have seen in the last several days if we tried because there are simply too many. We have seen police kneeling on the neck of a person being arrested. We have seen police officers spray gas into a packed-tight crowd at 12th and Pine. We have seen police officers wearing black tape over their badges, obscuring their identities. We have seen police arrest a person, standing alone, playing a trumpet. We have seen police officers instigate violence by grabbing a pink umbrella. We have seen a journalist hit with a projectile. We have seen our LGBTQ+ communities living on Capitol Hill reporting tear gas seeping into their homes, sickening loved ones and our children. We have seen our queer and trans siblings arrested, booked into our jail facilities which inherently disrespect their lived identities and kept there while the courts tasked with protecting their constitutional rights closed.

These injustices must stop immediately. You are the people empowered to stop them.

We stand in solidarity with Black-led movements in making the following demands:

- 1) Defund the Seattle Police Department by 50%. In a time of economic crisis, we must be diverting every available resource to feeding, housing, and caring for our communities.
- 2) Immediately direct Seattle Police Department funding to Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ-led community health, safety, and economic

initiatives. Mental health support, housing, youth support, and community-driven restorative justice must be allowed to flourish and grow as our communities recover from the trauma of pandemic and police violence.

3) Immediately cease arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of protesters. The First Amendment is an affirmative right, not a defense against prosecution.

4) Immediately prohibit the use of tear gas, flash-bangs, rubber bullets, and other tools of violence by law enforcement against protesters. These incendiary devices have been shown to escalate violence and harm unarmed individuals.

5) Immediately prohibit any obstruction of badge numbers by police officers, for any reason.

We appreciate that you may feel bound by competing forces, including the Seattle Police Officers Guild. However, as lawyers and legal services providers, we are also negotiators and mediators, and we know that in every negotiation, there comes a time when one must hold the line for justice. We demand that you hold that line, at every opportunity, in support of our Black loved ones, our queer and trans families, our Brown and Indigenous neighbors.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director

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