

Dear Colleagues and
Friends,

The Maine Resilience Building Network (MRBN) staff and board stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and those protesting the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and too many others at the hands of law enforcement.

We believe that this is a critical moment to reflect on the ways in which resilience, as concept, has itself been employed to perpetuate systemic racism in schools, health organizations, and social service organizations. We are deeply troubled by the ways in which resilience has been used to justify the expectation that Black men, women and children learn to cope with inequities entrenched in unjust policies, practices and beliefs. In our desire to create a world in which the constraints of oppression can be lifted and all of us can live in peace, we cannot forget that “systems” are made up of people. Unjust systems allow people to spread hate and bigotry; unjust systems allow people to inflict trauma on generations of Black Americans; unjust systems allow people to ignore the racism and discrimination happening to people of color every day. The movement that is occurring across this nation challenges us to consider whether we are one of those *people*?

MRBN, while standing in solidarity with the protesters, recognizes its own organizational need to define what “resilience” means in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. Resilience cannot mean that Black individuals need to learn to cope with the indignities they suffer because of the color of their skin. Rather, supporting resilience must mean an elimination of the policies, practices and beliefs that allow the indignities to be perpetuated in the first place. Resilience cannot mean that Black children must learn to cope by being taught how to avoid being assaulted or killed by the police. Rather, resilience must lead our government to enshrine respect for people of color and particularly Black Americans in the policies, practices and beliefs of its agents.

We believe that resilience, as a concept, must be used to center healing and systemic change in our organizations and our lives. MRBN acknowledges that its practices may have perpetuated systemic racism and is committed to engaging in learning and mobilizing towards an inclusive, more equitable and just future for all. We hope that if there is harm- present or past-, that we can listen to your truth and be educated by your experiences. We are open to learning from the members of our Network what steps they are taking to center racial justice in their policies, practices, trainings and believe that as a network, we can and will do better by learning from one another. We invite anyone who is interested in being a part of these conversations or sharing reflections to be in touch our Executive Director about how to get involved.

We will strive for a day in which every person is free of unjust treatment, racism, and discrimination. The hymn, *We Shall Overcome*, can be heard as the anthem for resilience. Declaring peace is a start but a lasting peace will require so much more. MRBN’s staff and board are committed to do their part by first stopping and being introspective and then taking action as an organization to shed light on injustices and inequities so that goal of, “We shall live in peace someday” is realized in our lifetimes. Resilience requires that “someday” be today.

In justice, solidarity and
peace,

Maine Resilience Building Network Board of Directors and
Staff

June
2020