

MICHIGAN WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
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Nov. 23rd, 2020

To: Ms. Christina Saunders, Working Group Secretary (OHCHR)
From: Maureen Taylor, MSW
Re: Written Statement

Dear Colleagues;

It is an honor to submit this written statement offered by myself and Marian Kramer. We are both members of the National Welfare Rights Union and these comments are directed toward our thoughts connected to being women of color.

Ms. Kramer serves as National Chair for the Welfare Rights Union, and I am the State chairperson for the MI/Welfare Rights Organization. We are an advocate group that fights for the rights of poor people.

I have been appointed to Michigan's Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Task Force on Racial Disparities that focuses on the disproportionate numbers of Black people infected and killed by the Covid-19 virus. African-Americans represent 14% of the total Michigan population, but we are 40% of those infected and 42% of those who lose our lives to this pandemic. Poverty is an index not factored into these figures even though nearly all those connected to the virus are low-wealth. The situation started off extremely critical in February and March as the virus started to capture communities of color in record numbers. Under lying health problems plague poor people...infrequent medical visits, no healthcare coverage, less than nutritious diets, etc., all circumstances that lead to unequal infection rates and high death numbers. Low-income families in Michigan are often single-head-of-household mothers who suffer the triple plague of capitalism. They are poor, they may be Black, and they are female workers. All we have to keep us alive is our labor power. We work, we fight through racism, we fight through gender bias, or we suffer in America.

People in our country are taught to believe that ...'we are all equal'... This has never been true, and the recent presidential election has exposed that myth yet again. Divisions based on color have been a successful tool used to keep one group fighting with another as the wealthy concentrate on profits at our expense. The history of slavery is referred to as the 'American original sin' and it lives today.

The recent contentious presidential campaign highlighted the role of persons of African decent when one of the candidates labeled voters from communities of color as illegal & fraudulent. This was a veiled message suggesting that a vote for that candidate would secure the balance of power in the hands of white people as is. More than 73 million voters heard part of that communication

which was rooted in that same divisive history, but more than 80 million voters rejected that same message.

At the end of the day, America has much to do to address decades of discrimination based on color. The murder of George Floyd, of Breanna Taylor, of Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others mark the bloody trail of tears that Black people have walked and will continue to walk until equal opportunity is secured. Black women are helping to lead the fight for affordable housing, for universal healthcare, for anti-discrimination laws, for a guaranteed annual income, and for so many other 'quality of life' improvements. Technology today is able to offer all of these changes that will improve the standard of living for us all. We are in place to usher in life improvements that lift up those in the 'row-boats' instead of watching government lavish billions on those in the yachts. Change is in the air but won't happen unless we unite with like-minded visionaries who will stop at nothing to make the world a better place for us all. Dare To Fight, Dare To Win!!!

Respectfully Submitted by,

Maureen Taylor

Maureen Taylor, State Chairperson
MI/Welfare Rights Organization

Marian Kramer

Marian Kramer, National Chair
National Welfare Rights Union