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## Greenstein: CBPP Adds Its Voice to Calls for Justice and Systemic Reform

*CBPP today released a statement from Robert Greenstein, president, on the killing of George Floyd and subsequent protests for Black lives.*

Our nation is at a pivotal moment. As the global pandemic lays bare the stark racial disparities that remain a central feature of American life in 2020, we once again grieve and mourn the inexcusable death of a Black person at the hands of police. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country have now marched or raised their voices in other ways to express their outrage and to call for action and justice.

As an organization whose central mission is to advance economic justice, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recognizes the critical importance of speaking out forcefully against racism — particularly racism against Black people, which persists in strong and often virulent form some 155 years after the end of the Civil War — and policies and practices that help perpetuate the stunning disparities that disadvantage people of color. We at the Center stand with the countless organizations, activists, community groups, religious and civic leaders, and others in calling for justice for George Floyd — and for fundamental, systemic reforms to foster racial equity and end racial injustice.

Today's stark racial disparities, vividly evident across an array of social, political, and economic measures, reflect centuries of oppression and prejudice. For decades, the Black unemployment rate has remained roughly double the white rate in both good economic times and bad. Black Americans working full-time make less than three-fourths as much as their white peers. Disparities in wealth are even more severe. The pandemic has thrown these disparities into even sharper relief as Black Americans, who are roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population, make up 23 percent of the COVID-19-related deaths to date.

We simply must reckon with this history and end these disparities if our nation is ever to make good on its promise of freedom, dignity, and a fair chance for everyone.

Words of support, while important, are not enough. For its part, the Center has been engaged in an organization-wide journey in the past few years to incorporate racial equity more fully into its work and organizational culture. This includes prioritizing organizational diversity and inclusion, examining the ways we treat each other, and bringing racial equity more fully and explicitly into our research and policy analysis. This is not a short or simple task, and we still have much work ahead,

but it is fundamental to living out our commitment to reducing poverty and inequality and advancing social justice.

For their part, national, state, and local policymakers now need to go beyond words and take actions that reflect the significance of this moment. They need to heed the calls of those seeking justice for George Floyd and make demonstrable, lasting progress toward eliminating the racial inequality and injustice that have been the vicious underside of life in this nation for far too long.

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