



A Statement from Members of Leadership of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

June 5, 2020

If we lived in a pandemic-free world, AFCC members from across the globe would have gathered in New Orleans last week. They would have heard from keynote speaker Grande Lum, former director of the US Department of Justice Community Relations Service. Grande is a leading expert on the very type of conflict that is ravaging so many US cities in the aftermath of the unjustified killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. The keynote address was to have focused on the parallels between conflict in the community and within families. In the wake of last week's events, it is quite clear the discussion would have unfolded very differently than originally planned.

AFCC condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the actions of the police officers that killed George Floyd, along with the underlying racist attitudes and beliefs that all too often contribute to the inequitable treatment of people of color, especially by those in authority. It must be acknowledged that as an organization largely composed of white, affluent members, few of us can claim a true understanding of being subject to ongoing systemic discrimination and oppression. What we can do, however, is better recognize how family law, dispute resolution, and mental health professionals can use their skills, beliefs, and attitudes to promote greater understanding and compassion in order to contribute to the change our society so desperately needs.

Although our focus is family conflict, we believe there are important parallels to consider and that members of AFCC are particularly well-suited to promoting positive change.

AFCC members place an emphasis on providing a meaningful voice to the disenfranchised, whether they are children, intimate partner violence survivors, or unrepresented parents.

AFCC members understand that in order to truly resolve conflict and promote change, we must dig well beneath the surface level to issues that may be longstanding and deeply, historically, and systematically rooted.

AFCC members understand that conflicts are not only systemic, but individual within relationships, and that problems do not get resolved without an understanding of specific people and their perspectives, and, importantly, empathy.

AFCC members understand that conflict is complex and nuanced. Among the many actors, including fathers, mothers, children, stepparents, police officers, protesters, and rioters, no group is monolithic, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

AFCC members understand that crisis is an opportunity for change. This moment is one such opportunity.

This moment may be a tipping point in our history, but that will not happen as a result of a few days, or even a few weeks, of protests. The progress made in this country since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act is wholly insufficient. Racial profiling, mass incarceration, voter suppression, white supremacist movements, and other vestiges of the Jim Crow era have no place in 21st century societies.

AFCC members are poised to make a difference and help create much needed change. Just as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges we face, there is no single action for us all to take. Everyone seems to have an opinion on who should take action and how. We simply urge you to do *something*. Volunteer your time. Donate money. Protest peacefully, wearing a mask and at a safe social distance. Engage in efforts in your community. We are all in this together.