



RENEE HOPKINS OPENING STATEMENT ALLIANCE VIRTUAL LUNCHEON - JUNE 1, 2020

Hello everyone. My name is Renee Hopkins and I'm the CEO of the Alliance for Gun Responsibility. Thank you so much for joining us today for our first virtual luncheon.

Before we begin our program, I want to take a moment to hold space for the pain and anger culminating this last week, but built over centuries of injustice. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and countless others, have shone a spotlight on how our systems are built on white privilege and power and are designed to wield violence of all kinds- economic, environmental, mass incarceration, and state sanctioned- against Black and Brown people.

These past few weeks have also made it clear who gets to call for justice and who doesn't. When armed white demonstrators stormed state capitols, threatening leaders and protesting against the so-called oppression of stay at home orders they were met peacefully and called "good people." But when demonstrators -lead by people of color and their allies-took to the streets to protest the state-sanctioned killing of George Floyd they were called "thugs" and were threatened to be shot.

We stand in solidarity with those demanding justice. It is too late to bring real justice for the families of George, Breonna, and Ahmaud. Their lives have already been stolen.

But it is not too late to root out the injustice, and violence that incited their murders and the murders of so many other black lives.

We condemn violence in all its forms. Far too often, violence comes in the form of police violence as it did in the case of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor--or in the form of white vigilantism as in the case of Ahmaud Arbery. And far too often that violence doesn't capture our attention. Instead it is excused or encouraged by our justice system.

Our goal at the Alliance is to end the crisis of gun violence in our communities. And our vision is a world free from gun violence--free from all violence.

We cannot achieve that goal or realize that vision without acknowledging that the history of gun violence and gun laws in America is completely intertwined with white supremacy and structural racism. And in fighting against those, we are also fighting against gun violence.

It is our responsibility to fight to root out the racism and injustice that is stitched into the fabric of our country.

And as a White woman leading an organization in a movement that so often centers White voices, I must and we must also confront our privilege and our complicity with these unjust systems. We know that this work, the work of being true partners in solidarity, does not start or end with a statement like this.

We commit to listening to and standing next to and behind the many people who have been doing this work for decades. And we commit to continuing to ask ourselves what more we can do and how can we be better. Even when it makes us uncomfortable. Even when we get it wrong.

So we start today's event with heavy hearts but an even stronger resolve to stay in this fight for true safety from violence for ALL. We're so glad you're here.