



Statement on the George Floyd Protests

At Scenic Pittsburgh, we want to acknowledge that many people in our region, and across the nation, are feeling pain and frustration right now at the deep wounds wrought by racist violence in our communities. The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have joined a list that is shamefully long, and includes the names of Pittsburghers Antwon Rose II and Jonny Gammage, among too many others. We are united in horror at the toll of racism in our country.

You may be asking, "What does a pro-beauty organization have to say about social justice?" But our mission – to protect and promote the scenic beauty of southwestern Pennsylvania, both built and natural – is grounded in the unshakeable belief that *every person* deserves to work, live and play in a beautiful place. For us, a beautiful community is one that offers access to healthy greenspace; equitable economic opportunities; and acknowledges its genuine, not whitewashed, pride in its history and future. A beautiful community protects its residents from the degradation of environmental destruction and visual blight, like billboards, uncollected trash, and neglected property. So we recognize that our pursuit of the beautiful community is doomed to fail if we do not also protect and promote justice – economic, environmental, and racial. And it is crucial that we all succeed in this fight for justice, because our scenic resources - our shared, irreplaceable resources that make our communities places worthy of love - are key to our future.

We have seen first-hand that the burden of blight, visual pollution and environmental degradation falls disproportionately on communities with fewer economic resources and on communities of color. We have also seen that it is these communities who often lack the funding and capacity to invest in their scenic resources, even when they are fully aware that these resources are crucial to their communities' thriving. As COVID-19 has ravaged our region, we here at Scenic Pittsburgh had already decided we must change the way we work towards our mission, and we had resolved that our focus going forward must be on serving those communities most in need. That decision seems even more urgent today. While we will continue to work with any community in our 10-county region that requests our support, we are turning our outreach efforts to two overlapping groups of communities: those that are currently in, or about to pass into, Act 47 status; and those that meet federal and state criteria for being low- to moderate-income.

We know that this is not enough, and that the task of seeking justice and ensuring a beautiful community for all is immense. But we are hopeful that through our work, and the work of so many other organizations and individuals who are rising to this challenge, we may see change coming to pass.

The Scenic Pittsburgh Staff