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## Black Lives Matter: AHANA's Commitment to Transformational Change

The AHANA Board has chosen Juneteenth, the day commemorating the emancipation of slaves in the United States, to make a statement on Black Lives Matter.

In the last few weeks, our nation has witnessed unprecedented protest demanding for justice, equality and end to police brutality. In the days after the murder of George Floyd, we put out a statement decrying the callous murder of a Black life. Many citizens have since marched on the streets and raised their collective voices in support of Black lives and in opposition to police violence, oppression, inequity and state-sponsored terror.

Our nation's history is littered with devaluation and degradation of the lives of Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). The systemic injustice we are seeing now has been present since the founding of this nation. Every institution of our government, business, housing and finance are steeped in systemic injustices and racism. The vestiges of slavery, Jim Crow laws, Spanish conquistadors, forceful removal and pillage of Native Americans, Japanese internments and many more are not accidents of history but a continuation of degradation of human lives based on the color of their skin

As a regional organization committed to expansion of equality and fairness many have looked to AHANA and other People of Color (POC) organizations, to proffer solutions to the problem. We haste to say that people of color did not create the system that breeds a contempt for human lives and should not be made to stand alone to decry and dismantle it. It is incumbent on those who created a dehumanizing racial system to pull it down. We warn that as a nation, we cannot just do a window dressing and allow this moment to pass. A police officer kneeling down and/or giving water to protesters are not enough succor for years of systemic racism.

For any avoidance of doubt, we unequivocally state that AHANA supports everything that Black Lives Matter stands for. We believe the movement's ethos and desire is good and it will help our nation heal its racial wounds. We view any attempt to mischaracterize the movement goals and aspirations as an attempt to continue the status quo of inequality that often leads to the formation of organizations such as AHANA. We as business owners and professionals commit to continue to provide energy and comfort to BIPOC and our white allies who are

speaking out against injustice and degradation of human lives. Any loss to our business during this protest is nothing compared to the degradation Spokane suffers daily from systemic racism.

Our government and big businesses must recognize that they bear a heavy burden and responsibility for this on-going injustice and they are capable of taking steps to address it, if they are willing to listen to the voice of courage advanced by organizations like AHANA and the Black Lives Matter movement. They must be willing to recognize the harms that are caused when meritorious businesses are ignored due to systemic inequities, or the lack of financial, personal or systemic support of minority businesses and communities.

We invite those in government who are willing to engage in transformative reform of our institutions in Eastern Washington to partner with organizations like AHANA to do a deep dive of practices in government and businesses that inhibit equity. Black, indigenous, and people of color should not be made to be the only ones crying out for reform and yet, the solutions should not be made without us.

As people of color and as a business organization, it is not enough for us to kneel in solidarity with George Floyd. We must stand up. It is not enough for us, as a society, to say, “we are better than this” and bow our heads in shame. It is clear, we are not. We *should* be better than this. Now is the time to enact meaningful legislation and policies with respect to all aspects of the criminal justice system – from the street to the courtroom. It is also the time for equity, fair application of the law, increased transparency, and accountability. As we lean in to do this hard work, let us all listen to the courageous voices of the Black Lives Matter movement as we march to end racism. The time for action is NOW!

AHANA Board of Directors

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**AHANA VISION:** An Inland Northwest region with many successful and thriving multi-ethnic and multi-cultural businesses fully engaged in the political, social and economy of the region.

**AHANA MISSION:** The mission of AHANA is to advocate, assist, and develop business growth and opportunities for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural businesses; and advocate for increased employment in the Inland Northwest.