



To Whom It May Concern,

September 16, 2020

The members of Milkweed Connections feel it is imperative to issue a statement regarding the brutal killings, and attempted killings, of our African American and other BIPOC brothers and sisters, by law enforcement, here in Wisconsin and nationwide.

As service providers for Comprehensive Community Services, and other grant funded community human services programs, we see the human costs of militarized policing, drug war campaigns, underfunded education, unaffordable safe housing, and very limited vocational training programs—costs which are paid by those whom we serve. While law enforcement, the courts, and crisis intervention workers may respond to momentary instances of chaos and trauma in individuals' lives, we are there from the moment of crisis, walking side by side with our participants through their healing journeys, all the way to their arrivals at wellness.

This effort is successful because those of us at Milkweed who provide peer support and mentorship are survivors of trauma, addiction, incarceration, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and the litany of other microaggressions and macroaggressions prevalent in this society. Our ability to relate to our participants is exactly the reason why, at this period in time, we find it critical to speak on the behalf of individuals who could very likely be the next Breonna Taylor, Daniel Prude, George Floyd, Jacob Blake, Philando Castile, Trayvon Martin, Michelle Cusseaux, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner—how many more lives? At this point, there is another Black or Brown body being memorialized weekly due to racialized killings.

Milkweed Connections has made the decision to increase its diversity of providers. We believe other agencies and programs should do likewise. If there were a dire need for translators in Wisconsin, government agencies and non-profit organizations would seek out those who were fluent in the needed languages to fill those positions. But this is not the case when it comes to cultural differences. Participants suffering from a variety of illnesses, physical and mental, come in every color, and from every walk of life. Yet, as providers, we often find ourselves at tables with homogeneously White treatment teams, despite the diversity of participants in these Department of Human Services programs. It is time that we take the initiative in bringing people of color to these tables, not only for the participants' sake, but also to give those who have been most impacted, the agency to help where they are uniquely needed.

Milkweed Connections stands by BIPOC communities here in Wisconsin, throughout the nation, and worldwide. We will do our part to ensure that we chip away at the systemic racism so prevalent in every institution of our society. We will devote our work to this effort because the societal issues we are facing will never be eradicated until we all choose to confront them where we live, and where we work.

Milkweed Connections LLC