



## One Cautious, Yet Meaningful, Step Forward

After the announcement of the guilty on all counts verdict in the April 20, 2021, Derek Chauvin trial, we are all hopeful that America has taken a step forward from which it will not retreat. Although it was a baby step, it was a step in the right direction.

Our hearts go out to the family of George Floyd, and we hope that this verdict brings them relief and peace. They have epitomized grace and leadership during a horrific time for them as a family, and for society as a whole.

It is a testament to where we are as a society that despite the overwhelming evidence of Chauvin's guilt—caught on camera and witnessed in broad daylight—too many members of our Black and Brown communities could not let themselves believe he would be found guilty. Too many times they have been let down. Too many times they could not expect support and justice from the systems put in place to protect all of us—not just some of us. Too many times they have witnessed a total disregard for human life, because it was the life of a person of color. What that says about us as a society is shameful.

It is our collective responsibility to do the hard work needed to continue to combat systemic racism and to ensure that all Black and Brown members of our communities are heard and valued. This work may require big changes, such as scrapping hiring practices and starting anew, to provide equal opportunity; or it may require small actions, such as, regularly patronizing minority-owned businesses, to support our communities. But we must start somewhere and we must start now.

This verdict is more than vindication for the Floyd family. This verdict is for all those whose lives were taken by police aggression, in the course of going through their ordinary days. This verdict is a wake-up call to all of us to be allies to, and voices for, those who have never had the privilege of not fearing the police. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that this week's baby step forward is only the beginning of healing and change that will continue. Our steps must be bolder, and our voices must amplify the cry for racial justice.

At this inflection point, let us take those bold steps to change what we know to be wrong and to ensure that justice really is for all. This verdict is not a conclusion but, instead, is the beginning in our drive to achieve sustainable change. Our progress down this road will be George Floyd's legacy. We cannot let him—and all of those who still await justice—down.

Joanne S. Barry, CAE  
NYSSCPA  
Executive Director/CEO