



Contact Information:

Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
Christine James-Brown, President and CEO
cjamesbrown@cwla.org

NEWS RELEASE

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Achieving Justice for Children and Families

Let's stop playing whack-a-mole by calling for the defunding of the police, the child welfare system, the justice system, nursing homes, and other systems that primarily serve the poor and people who are Black and Brown. We must recognize that all of these systems are operating within, and often constrained by, an overall system that itself is built on a history of racism and lack of priority for children, poor people, and more recently, immigrants.

The devastating effects of the coronavirus and the images of Black men being brutally killed by police have created a remarkable and promising reawakening across the United States. It has been especially heartwarming to see the response of the young people—those who will, thankfully, soon run this country.

Present-day America is a place of worsening inequities; a higher percentage of children who are poor than any other industrialized nation; a disgraceful minimum wage level; and substandard housing, food insufficiency, and lack of health care for millions. We keep children in cages that are raging with the coronavirus and let wealthy people out of jail for "compassionate release." We are somehow comfortable with seeing thousands of mostly Black, Brown, and low-income seniors die in nursing homes, yet we worry about whether other seniors will be able to travel to the EU on holiday this summer. We allocate millions in stimulus dollars to large companies, but give crumbs to children, families, and the community-based agencies that serve them.

There is no question that the police department, the justice system, the educational system, and the child welfare system need to change. As someone with a major commitment to making the child welfare system less racist and more equitable, I have a renewed determination to work with children, families, communities, and agencies that provide child welfare services to ensure that our policies and practices are intentionally focused on advancing equity.

But I am also committed to working in partnership with these stakeholders to change the policies and funding that influence the ability of so many systems, communities, and families to achieve their goals. The common advocacy space for all systems that serve people who are Black and Brown, those who are poor, those who are immigrants, and other populations that are vulnerable, is the need for the services, supports, and access to resources that prevent people from requiring system intervention after problems have occurred. Rather than negatively reacting to the loud call for change in our systems, we should form alliances with families, communities, and one another to change our nation. We have seen firsthand the devastation that our country's policies have created for the people we serve, and for that reason, we should be the first to become allies with communities to create change.

I am writing this as a Black woman who sometimes struggles to hold on to the love of the promise that this country represents. But this time in our collective history is crucial. We must ensure that each one of us takes on the professional and personal responsibility to make this country better.

In order to feel good about this year's Fourth of July celebrations, we must all recommit to working to achieve the true meaning of the holiday: freedom and independence for *all*.

Christine James Brown

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CWLA President and CEO