



## SONOMA LAND TRUST BELIEVES BLACK LIVES MATTER

---

June 4, 2020

The past two weeks have revealed the hollowness of the slogan tossed out at the start of the pandemic, that “we are all in this together.” The Land Trust condemns the horrific killing of George Floyd, and the despicable threats made to Christian Cooper (a birder, conservation donor and volunteer), as morally unconscionable acts. They are also harsh reminders of the many injustices and inequities that pervade our society. Yet, heartbroken as we are, we must go beyond the horror and revulsion we feel and tackle the root causes of injustice.

As a science-based organization, we can’t and won’t look away from what the data is telling us, and the evidence is painfully clear. Many outcomes—from expectations of due process to coronavirus survival rates—depend on one’s race and socioeconomic status. This is wrong, contrary to every value we cherish, and it must stop.

Here at home in Sonoma County, we must confront the violence of inequality engulfing our Latinx neighbors as they suffer appallingly disproportionate impacts from the pandemic. While inadequate access to healthcare and discrimination are part of the systemic causes, so too is unequal access to parks and open space—one of the key indicators of a community’s health outcomes.

We believe that access to nature is a right for everyone, and the physical, mental, and spiritual health that nature provides must be easily available to all of our communities. We acknowledge that we in the conservation movement have often ignored this imperative in the past and sometimes actively worked against it. Through humbling and instructive processes, we have emerged today as an organization fundamentally committed to addressing inequities of access to nature. This is the environmental justice work that Sonoma Land Trust has pledged to carry out to address the enormous legacy of institutional racism.

As we navigate this turbulent and chaotic period in our history, the Land Trust is guided by the lessons that nature teaches us. As Dr. King put it: “It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

We will build and strengthen our communities based on the values of respect for the interdependence of all living things, and a reverence for the richness and diversity of life on our shared planet.