



# ABBOTT HOUSE

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100 North Broadway  
Irvington, NY 10533  
914.591.7300

1775 Grand Concourse  
Bronx, NY 10453  
718.329.4968

100 Commerce Drive  
New Windsor, NY 12553  
845.664.7410

James L. Kaufman, LCSW-R, *President and CEO*

Dear Friends,

I write to you today not just as the President of Abbott House, a human-service organization committed to protecting the dignity of all individuals in our care, but as a fellow American, a colleague, a friend, and a father, who is deeply saddened by the state of our nation.

The tragic and senseless killing of George Floyd coupled with the emotional and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have sent shockwaves through our nation, exposing the serious and dividing lines of racial inequality that continue to plague our country. The horrifying images that stream live across social media and on our television sets are stark reminders of how much more needs to be done to break the cycle of systemic racism.

This is a deep-rooted public-health crisis that continues to threaten the well-being of so many people of color, who often lack access to quality healthcare, first-rate education, housing opportunities and fair wages. Many of the individuals impacted by the effects of racial inequality make up the very communities that Abbott House was founded to serve – and include our own essential workers, who serve quietly and courageously on the front lines of caregiving. They too, struggle to overcome these barriers and often have to work two jobs just to make ends meet.

Today at Abbott House, I was proud to be part of the first in a series of “Courageous Conversations,” a forum led by one of our Vice Presidents created with the purpose of sharing stories, honest emotions, fears and support through the eyes of staff, children and families of Abbott House. I listened to a black mother speak about how she prepares her young son each day to venture out into a world where he may be perceived as a threat or unwelcomed simply because of the color of his skin. And how she prays for his safe return.

Listening to her story, I was reminded of the heroes of my childhood like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy, Jr. who were true ambassadors and catalysts in the civil rights movement. It is so disheartening that this many years later the evil of systemic racism is still limiting opportunities for so many people in our nation.

On October 29, 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a speech to Abbott House staff and residents entitled “The Dignity of Family Life.” “Who is my neighbor?” he challenged. “A great man (has) the capacity to project the I into thou.” His words ring true perhaps now more than ever. In this moment, we are all being called to respond and stand up against racism but also to let our voices be heard. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. also said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” In that spirit, Abbott House will continue to stand in solidarity with all those who seek diversity, equity and inclusivity. Each day, I will ask myself and those affected by racism and injustice, what can I do for them, for the people we serve, and our staff. All of us, regardless of circumstance, have a responsibility to do our part to make the world a better place for generations to come.

With hope in our hearts, we will stay committed to the possibility of peaceful change and will do our part to affect that change in our world.

Please be safe, be healthy and be courageous.

James L. Kaufman, LCSW-R  
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