



**Dominican Sisters**  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

## **Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids Respond to Killing of Patrick Lyoya**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – April 19, 2022 -- Our hearts are heavy and outraged at the death of Patrick Lyoya. For the first time in thirty years, this month many religious traditions are celebrating their major feasts at the same time. These faith communities, which are an integral part of our Grand Rapids civic community, honor and ritualize significant traditions which speak of freedom, peace, equality, love, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, unity, and non-violence. We, Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids, in our Catholic Christian tradition, preach the message of Jesus Christ who commanded his disciples to love one another as he loved, who responded to violence by giving his life for all, and who, after his resurrection from the dead, proclaimed and offered the gift of PEACE to his followers and all humanity. This gift has been passed down to future generations of Christians since that first proclamation of peace from our Risen Savior.

In this context, we raise our voices in response to the violent killing of Patrick Lyoya on April 4. We offer first our prayers and condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew him and loved him. Our hearts break that this immigrant's journey from his homeland of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United States has ended here in Grand Rapids in such a brutal and senseless way.

Secondly, we call for accountability and full transparency of the Grand Rapids Police Department, which must commit to transforming the policing culture that tolerates violent responses, especially in non-violent situations. As well, the policing culture must be transformed to eliminate all vestiges of racism in judgment and response. Only when there are racism-free policing practices will the whole community embrace a sense of trust in the police department as one that seeks to serve and protect every citizen. This is hard work, and it must be on-going. We offer our prayers for the women and men in blue who become police officers in the first place out of a desire to protect and serve. They encounter the possibility of danger on a daily basis in their work and are trained to make a proportionate response. We offer our support for all efforts to bring about transformation and reignite the police officers' oath of service and code of ethics.

Mr. Lyoya is one of many people of color who have died at the hands of those who are commissioned to protect them and the community. Too, the circumstances of the traffic stop are not the first time a non-violent situation escalated to deadly violence. His death will not be the last – not until every one of us desires, seeks, and works to end racism and violence. This work needs to

include the police department, and every citizen of this great city also needs to acknowledge his/her own attitudes that allow inequity, injustice, aggression, discrimination, and prejudice to undermine the values of peace, justice, and freedom. We must engage the opportunities before us to encounter the other and see her/his inherent dignity; open ourselves to the lived experience of the other and hear their pain and suffering; and work to transform our places of employment, schools, neighborhoods, and places of worship to be places of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all. Otherwise, we will remain a community divided, disregarding the voices of our better angels that call us to our higher and best selves, echoing the values that are being celebrated this month in houses of worship all around our city.

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“The Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids condemn the systemic sin of racism. Hate and discrimination diminish us all.

“The Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids stand against harmful rhetoric and actions that result in fear and evoke hatred in our cities and neighborhoods. Any conversation or activity that contributes to division, hatred, violence, or disrespect of another human being hurts all of us as a human family.

“We, as Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids, see first the common ground of our humanity and allow our differences only to enrich, not to disparage. In all of our undertakings, we will notice first and foremost the human person before us.”

*Dominican Sisters~ Grand Rapids 2015 Statement Against Racism, Hatred, and Violence*