

Melissa Sargent: The time for change is now.

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Far too many black lives, including the life of George Floyd, have been lost and harmed at the hands of bias, prejudice, and systemic racism.

Right now, there is deep rooted fire and passion within our community, and throughout the globe- I hear it in the calls of peaceful protesters throughout our city, state, and nation. I see it expressed in the murals and art that currently lines up and down State Street, and beyond. I witness it in the countless moments of unity & solidarity between strangers and community members alike. I too, am sickened by the senseless murder of George Floyd, and by the fact that this is the reality of the world we presently live in.

Discrimination of any kind is out of line with the values we Wisconsinites hold dear, and are renowned for. Here in Wisconsin, we take pride in our sense of community, our Midwestern politeness, and our ability to come together and help one another in times of need. Yet, for far too many of our friends and neighbors, these values do not align with their lived experiences. We, as Wisconsinites, can do better. We must do better. The sanctity of our values and democracy depends on it. Above all, lives depend on it.

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I know that in order for change and growth to be both tangible and long-term in our state, we will face challenges. It will take countless hours of community conversations, deliberation, and determined and responsive leadership. I also know, that in order for us to move ahead, we must work tirelessly together to remove all

barriers that prevent folks from being safe and being able to achieve their dreams.

I hear, see, and feel a collective call- demanding transformative, life-saving changes within our nation, and right here in our state and community. We are at a moral crossroads, and our actions going forward will speak volumes. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we stand together-unwavering in our resolve for action. The time for change is now. We simply cannot delay any further.

I know that centuries of racism and injustices cannot be quickly fixed by one policy- this work will take intentional change throughout all of our systems, from addressing police brutality to criminal justice reform and beyond. I am inspired by the community, passion, strength, and resolve that I am seeing as folks of all races, backgrounds, and histories are uniting and demanding systematic change. The work being done right now makes me more hopeful than ever that change is upon us.

In the State Legislature, I have a track record of working tirelessly to address the harmful disparities and inequities in our state, as I have fought for policies that lift up all Wisconsinites. From championing for a living wage and healthcare for all, to working to end the prohibition and criminalization of cannabis, to advocating for economic, environmental, and racial justice, and so much more, I am ready to keep rolling up my sleeves and doing this work. I will continue to be a voice for change here in the state Capitol, and am hopeful that the voices of the black community and all of Dane County will be heard throughout.

My solidarity with the black community, and my commitment to working for equity & justice for people of color across Wisconsin, is steadfast. In the State Senate, I am determined to continue to work tirelessly to address the harmful disparities and inequities present in Wisconsin. We have a lot of work to do, but that does not mean that this work is not worth doing- far, far from it. Systemic injustice must be actively fought against on all levels, and I am committed to doing just that.

Enough is enough. We are in this fight for justice together-together, we can bring the change that we believe in to our state.

Black lives matter.

- Sargent, D-Madison, represents the 48th Assembly District and is a candidate for the 16th Senate District.