

Many people of late have expressed, in words, their thoughts and ideas during this time of renewed social awareness toward the issues of race in this country. Almost every organization, politician, celebrity, or athlete has expressed their views on the George Floyd killing and resulting protests. While statements and reform ideas are a great start the real test of future equality and justice for all Americans lies not in our words but our actions. We want our residents, community members and elected officials to know that we take our responsibilities to this rightful cause with humility for not having done more in the past and with enthusiasm, dedication and purpose to do better in the future.

While protests call primarily for police reform and racial justice, we will not have total racial equality without improvement to educational and economic justice for all races within our country. Before his untimely assassination in April of 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., not satisfied with the successful passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, began the “Poor People’s Campaign” to gain economic justice for poor people in the United States and improve the material conditions of life for black people. The focus of the campaign was that all people should have what they need to live and the most basic of that is quality affordable housing.

Lansing Housing Commission has a daily responsibility to provide the highest quality housing to our residents that provides a safe environment to raise families regardless of income source, race or color. We have recently provided the City of Lansing with a long-term strategy set by our board that will greatly improve the housing conditions of our residents. This includes economic investments totaling \$65 million within our properties. This investment includes the addition of air conditioning, dishwashers, new appliances and security, as well as physical improvements such as new roofs, windows and doors. The improvements will make our housing some of the most modern in the country. These improvements are being done without rent increases to our residents.

In addition, within the last year LHC has hired a Resident Services Coordinator to work directly with our residents and coordinate additional services with local agencies. These services include expanded access to health, mental health and educational opportunities for all ages. We have also revitalized our on-site community gardens and are providing nutritional education to increase food access and improve our resident’s food security.

There is much work to be done! These are just a few of the initiatives we plan to take in the coming months. The LHC Board of Directors and our staff are dedicated to action to improve the economic injustice of all our residents as Dr. King Jr. demanded over 50 years ago. The dignity of quality housing and the support of key educational, health and wellness services will anchor our mission going forward. We welcome further discussion and input on how we can do our part to go beyond statements and put into action real reforms and ideas in support of our residents and community members.