



Metro

Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza,
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer
213.922.7555 Tel
213.922.7447 Fax
washingtonp@metro.net

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Dear Metro Employee Family,

Our city, our agency, and our country are in the middle of a turbulent and painful time. On the heels of the unprecedented shutdowns and economic devastation caused by COVID-19, we are faced with alarming examples of long-standing racial injustice. The brutal, heartbreaking, and senseless killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and so many others perpetrated on the Black community have rightfully sparked outrage among Metro employees and in the heart of every decent American.

I am writing to you today to let you know that I understand the sadness, shock and heartache that Metro employees, millions of Angelenos and people around the country are feeling. I feel it too. I am not just a CEO, I am a Black Man and a father of a Black son. I am also a child of the Civil Rights Movement; whose mother took him to marches in the City of Chicago as a youngster. The hallmark of my tenure at Metro has been ensuring equity both in the services we provide to the community and within our agency. This has been evidenced by my standing up an Office of Race and Equity, advancing the Equity Platform and ensuring diversity on my senior leadership team.

My steadfast commitment to the principles of equity and equality does not stem from any official vote or action by a governing body, it comes from my own personal lived experience.

When I was about 15-16 years old, my mother, sisters and I were on our way home from church on a Sunday evening. It was about 9:30 p.m. and my single mother, who worked 12-14 hours per day, decided to treat all six of us to *one* hamburger apiece at White Castle. That's all she could afford, but she was so excited to do it that night. I think she sent me into White Castle, or perhaps as the only son of six, I was tabbed to go in with her. We went into the White Castle restaurant at 111th and State on the Southside of Chicago and purchased the burgers and got back into the car. We continued further South, to the public housing complex, where we lived. We pulled into the parking lot at our modest row apartments and got out of the car. Suddenly, a police squad car pulled up and two white cops jumped out and begin to call me by another name. "Hobson, Hobson!"

My mother was there, along with my sisters. I wasn't sure what to do. We were all out of the car and these officers had their guns drawn and were out of their car and calling me by the wrong name. They were, as we say, "locked and cocked." I was frozen looking at these cops and thought that they would kill me. My dear mother came around from the driver's side and got in between me and those police officers and said to them, his name is Phillip Washington, not Hobson. I thought the officers might shoot my mother, then me. My mother may have saved my life that night.

What was the backstory? I found out a week or so later, that a guy I knew, Donald Hobson, who was from the same neighborhood, had robbed a store. "Hobbs" was a few years older than I and was a serious dude. He had robbed a store earlier that evening and the cops were looking for him and they

thought I was him. I really believe they would have killed me that night without even asking me my name. This is the perspective that I come with as it relates to the recent George Floyd killing. And I'm sure many other Black men have had similar experiences and have this type perspective of the police.

It is because of my lived experience with racism that I take the Floyd, Taylor, Garner, Castile (Philando was my own third cousin in Minnesota) and other unjustified police killings so personally. These senseless killings were attacks not just on the Black community, but on our *entire* human community. I deeply empathize with all victims of abusive power and excessive force. We send our love and support to the families of the victims who are mourning these senseless deaths and tragic loss of life.

As hard as it may be, especially in the face of the widespread civil unrest we all witnessed over the weekend, we must remember how important Metro is to this community. Of course we provide an essential service, but in my mind this agency is so much more. I believe Metro is a shining example of what our society can and should be: a loving, caring, highly-diverse group of people who are considerate, compassionate, committed, kind, and above all accepting and respectful of all people and their differences.

As we continue to interact with the public, as well as our own family and friends, I encourage all of you to take this time to reflect on the ideals of empathy, compassion, and understanding. Let's look for ways to foster these values in our community and in our own lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip A. Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer