To our wonderful Lab community,

We are all witnessing a fracturing of our world: a global pandemic, unprecedented unemployment, deep anxiety about the future -- and now, mass protests in hundreds of cities as Black and Brown communities demand justice. Not just accountability. Not just firings and charges. But justice...

For George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and too many others.
For the thousands of Black Americans who have died from COVID-19.
For the thousands more who are impacted, every day, by environmental racism and climate injustice.

Every passing day illustrates the urgent need for our movements to recognize that our struggles are interconnected, including through the disproportionate impacts experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color from Covid-19, the climate crisis, and police brutality. The work to combat racism is not just done in solidarity but in our own self-interest. All people, including white people, are damaged by living in a racist society. As climate advocates, we must fight every day for our air, land, and water while ALSO fighting like hell to ensure that the systems meant to protect us (democracy, criminal justice, healthcare) do not continue failing Black and Brown communities.

Many of you don’t know my history, but I was born and raised in Detroit, a city that has endured the devastation of white flight, racism, and riots throughout its history. Detroit is one of the most segregated cities in America, and it has led to incalculable human suffering and marginalization. It is heartbreaking to see our great cities going through this again and again.

I am also gay, and the modern LGBTQ rights movement started with riots against police in June of 1969. We are a country forged in protest. It is in our DNA. Despite all our collective gains, a desire for justice is the common thread. Our multi-racial team at the Lab stands united in our commitment to Black and Brown lives.

While the Lab typically works behind the scenes, we don’t want to be behind the scenes during times of crisis. Supporting our community means speaking
up and out against white supremacy and doubling down on our commitment to equity and justice. We also recognize that different folks in our community need different types of support at this moment.

- We will listen to and amplify Black voices in this moment – their grief, their anger, their calls for justice, and their solutions.
- We will push back on misinformation and racist characterizations of what people are protesting about, and the political spin and sleight of hand that will blame black and brown people for being angry.
- We will dig further into our commitment to learning how to be anti-racist and how to be an accomplice in this work – not just an ally.
- We will discuss amongst our staff and our board how to marshal organizational resources and energy toward anti-racist efforts.
- We will also talk to our family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues about what is happening and tell them where we stand and what is moral at this moment. For those of us who are white, we will end “white silence,” and not wait for Black and Brown folks in our community to make the arguments on social media and in the news. We will be vocal even if it makes some of our friends uncomfortable.
- We will take action, calling on our local, state, and national leaders to demand justice for those whose lives have been taken and for the transformation of the system that continues to fail our Black and Brown neighbors.
- And we invite members of the Lab community to share your thoughts with us.

The Lab team is committed to honoring our equity and justice principles. Our staff is compiling a list of actions for us to take this week, and we plan to share these with the Lab community in our Lab Insights newsletter on Thursday.

There is no more business as usual. The only way forward is for all movements for racial and environmental justice to see our goals as aligned. There is no order of operations. We cannot fight campaigns for the climate and “come back later” to deal with equity.

Yours in the struggle,

Sean Kosofsky
Executive Director

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Climate Advocacy Lab
C/O Mindspace
575 Market St 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

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