

**STATEMENT FROM TALLADEGA COLLEGE PRESIDENT DR. BILLY C. HAWKINS
URGING JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD**

Talladega, AL (June 10, 2020) Talladega College was founded by two freedmen, William Savery and Thomas Tarrant, who desired a better life for their children and the children of other newly freed individuals. Through the collaborative efforts of freed slaves, missionary organizations, and the federal government, Talladega opened in 1867. As Alabama's first private historically black liberal arts institution, Talladega was, from its inception, committed to the "preservation of liberty" through education.



DR. BILLY C. HAWKINS

The murder of Mr. George Floyd is a sad reminder that preserving liberty requires active vigilance. Those who believe in justice must be honest enough to recognize injustice and courageous enough to confront it. The crime against Mr. Floyd was an assault on human dignity and a tragedy to all who truly value life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Although this case is one of a litany of documented cases of racism perpetrated against African Americans, it is among the cases that demonstrated the most shocking and egregious disregard for human life. It took witnessing the death of Mr. Floyd for Americans who believe in human rights to finally say, "Enough is enough," blatant racism must be addressed and our nation must immediately have police reform from the highest level down.

Although there are many good police officers who are dedicated to protecting the communities they serve, instances of bad policing are far too abundant. As an African American male with an earned PhD, I have been racially profiled and experienced discrimination at the hands of law enforcement and others. I have seen firsthand how easily one could lose the liberty that Talladega's founders were so committed to preserving.

While Talladega has transformed lives by paving the way for success through academic excellence for over 150 years, it has also been at the forefront of the battle for equality. Talladega's illustrious graduates include human rights activists such as Maria Fearing, who rescued enslaved children in the Congo over 100 years ago; acclaimed civil right attorney Arthur Shores; and Ebony Fashion Fair founder and philanthropist Eunice W. Johnson, who contributed over \$55 million to African American causes. Talladega's historic campus was the gathering place for critical civil rights planning meetings. It was at Talladega College that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ambassador Andrew Young, who were both invited to campus to speak in 1957, first met. The 1961 March on Anniston was led by Talladega students.

While today's students have benefited greatly from the paths paved by earlier generations, there is still much work to be done. Over the past two weeks, countless Talladegans have participated in peaceful protests in cities throughout the nation. I have reached out to students and they have spoken to me about their concerns for the future of African Americans and for our entire nation. They rightfully fear that the unjust killings of African Americans will continue so long as there are no legal consequences for those who commit these crimes. I look forward to maintaining communication with the Talladega College community as well as local and national leaders in order to help explore solutions to this grave problem.

I extend my deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Floyd and thank the courageous young people around the world who are participating in peaceful protests because they recognize what African Americans have endured from slavery to present times and understand that a change must come.

The continuous persecution of our citizens, too often at the hands of those sworn to protect them, makes mockery of the Declaration of Independence and confirms the alienability of the rights of African Americans.

Talladega College stands with those who demand justice for George Floyd.