

Statement of the Union League Club of Chicago

January 8, 2021

The Union League Club of Chicago traces its roots to the Union Leagues of America that formed during the Civil War, to strengthen the bonds between the American people and their elected federal government. For more than 140 years, our corporate objects have guided us in defending the Union, inculcating good citizenship, assuring the integrity of the ballot box, opposing corruption, securing honesty in the administration of National, State, and Municipal affairs, and seeking equality for all citizens.

It is why we condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence and destruction witnessed at the U.S. Capitol on January 6. Those events demonstrated an appalling disregard for our principles and institutions of self-government, and for the democratic processes of our republic. We specifically condemn all those who participated in this abdication of the sacred obligations of citizenship, as well as those who incited their actions. It is singularly regrettable that we must include here the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, who, through his words and deeds, breached his sworn oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

The Union League Club of Chicago believes there is no document more important to the nation or to the future of the Free World than our Constitution. We vigorously support it, including the Bill of Rights – especially the people’s right to free speech and to free assembly. Yet we remind all citizens that with these powerful rights come great responsibility. We may assemble, but we are obliged to do so peacefully, lawfully, and orderly. We may speak freely, but we cannot separate our words from their consequences.

Whether in Portland, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Chicago, Detroit, New York, Baltimore, or Washington, D.C., we must renounce violence, destruction, and bloodshed. **The Union League Club of Chicago calls on every citizen – and especially our elected officials – to de-escalate their rhetoric, suppress their contempt for the views of others, and moderate their personal conduct.**

We recall the words of Abraham Lincoln from his First Inaugural Address, “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

Let each of us listen to those “better angels of our nature,” by thinking rather than emoting; by acting with magnanimity rather than rage; by seeking compromise rather than conflict; by building up rather than tearing down.

Let us pledge this to ourselves, to our children, and to each another, so that, as Abraham Lincoln urged at Gettysburg, “Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from this earth.”

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