

LSU Law

Friends—whether student, alumni, faculty, staff, or more:

I write at a difficult juncture in our shared life. I hesitated when writing, much as one hesitates when penning a sympathy note because you know you do not have the perfect words. Then I remembered what I finally learned about sympathy notes, and I think it applies here, too: Sometimes it's simply most important to let people know two things: (1) you care; and (2) you are thinking about them.

So here I am, writing to you with no new facts to provide, and certainly no answers to give. Instead, I write without perfect words only to check in with you and let you know I am thinking of you.

And this time, while I genuinely wish I could use the term “unprecedented,” that now-overused word we keep hearing in connection with COVID-19, we all know the word does not apply. Last week did mark our nation's passage past a mile marker in its struggle with the COVID-19 virus, 100,000 lives lost. Two members of my extended family were among those 100,000. Many of you have lost friends and relatives, too. Let us honor and solemnize the occasion of this mile marker. I wish it could be erased and we could roll back in time.

But different events of the last week find me at the computer writing to you now. I wish what happened to Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis had been “unprecedented.” But it is not. And it has sparked protests based on righteous anger that is also preceded, rather than unprecedented. While I hope and pray, as a person of religious conviction, that we may find our way forward in peace, most of all I hope and pray that we do, in fact, find our way forward to a more just and perfect place as a nation. Not at a standstill. And certainly not backward.

Forward.

I could continue the list of events I wish could be called “unprecedented,” but this message would go on too long; others can speak more eloquently than I can. In his oft-quoted “Letter from Birmingham City Jail, April 16, 1963,” the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. responded to an open letter published by eight prominent white and self-proclaimed “liberal” Alabama clergymen. Their letter called on Dr. King to pursue integration in the courts rather than through the nonviolent resistance campaign, which they believed would be likely to incite civil disturbances. Said Dr. King:

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

...

It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. ... We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right. ... Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

What should people of good will do? Yesterday, former President George W. Bush [issued an eloquent statement](#) on the importance of listening to each other, and working for “peace rooted in justice.” The day before, former President Barack Obama [published powerful remarks](#) encouraging us to mobilize to raise awareness and to engage in the political process, particularly at the local level. These leaders provide wise counsel.

The LSU Law community is well-equipped to be people of good will who listen, who mobilize themselves and others for action, and who work for peace rooted in justice, and for justice rooted in peace. Now is the time.

Take care, be well, and go in peace.

All my best,



Lee Ann Wheelis Lockridge
LSU Law Interim Dean
David Weston Robinson Professor of Law
McGlinchey Stafford Professor of Law