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June 1, 2020

Dear Future Marquette Lawyer,

I hope that the beginning of summer finds you well, even if troubled by the recent events that threaten our communities. I write you today not on COVID-19, as so often these past several months, but about another topic that should trouble us all. At a basic level, it involves *cura personalis*—our care for and interest in each of our students.

This past weekend I was in contact with members of the Black Law Students Association, the Hispanic–Latino Law Students Association, the Asian Law Students Association, and I also heard from the Muslim Law Students Association. BLSA members, in particular, wrote me to express their concern about the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and, more generally, about demonstrations of racism in the rest of the country even just this year. Invoking not just Mr. Floyd but others such as Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, these students encouraged me as dean to speak directly to the Marquette Law School community.

Our president, Dr. Michael R. Lovell, wrote the Marquette University community by email this past Saturday, and he highlighted the previous day's [reflection by Dr. William Welburn](#). Dr. Welburn is vice president for inclusive excellence and a supporter of the Law School in all its forms—most importantly, our students and your current and future work. And the role of the president in speaking for the university scarcely requires any elaboration. I urge you to read Dr. Welburn's powerful reflection. He speaks for all of us at Marquette University, including the Law School, and I endorse every word that he set forth.

Yet, after hearing from our students and speaking with colleagues such as Dr. Welburn, I have embraced their counsel to write you myself. While I do not have the same background and experiences as the students who wrote me, I share their concern for where we are as a society—and, more specifically, for the way people of color in the United States suffer distinct injustices. Minneapolis is most prominently on people's minds, but there are numerous instances of racist conduct by police and others in authority—including many occasions of which we are not

June 1, 2020

Page 2

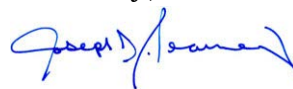
specifically aware because no video camera was rolling. Some of you no doubt have suffered such injustices, even as you have worked toward the day when you are a member of the bar.

While ways to address it within a particular society or community often will involve debatable policy judgments, I wish there to be no doubt where Marquette Law School stands: The sin of racism is a moral issue, and it requires urgent attention. Unfortunately for our society, the United States was conceived in this sin, and whatever our political leanings, none of us should doubt that fact or its enduring significance. I have long thought it to be the duty of every American not only to work toward a just society generally but to make *some* sort of contribution, even if small, toward healing our country's racial divide.

Let me return to the reflection that Dr. Welburn provided. It concludes by specifically urging all of us to engage in greater conversation on these matters: “[C]onversation should guide us in the coming academic year as we embrace what Pope John Paul II referred to as the ‘duty of solidarity,’ putting our knowledge, expertise, and faith into practice.” The Law School has sought to engender such conversation. To give one set of examples, we invited Professor Paul Butler of Georgetown University to deliver last year’s Boden Lecture, taking up the topic of prison abolition, and to engage in a dialogue with Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm on race and criminal justice reform. I know from reactions of students and others that these were welcome events for our community.

As part of moving *forward* with the rest of the university, the Law School will redouble its effort to engage in conversation—including with our students—about matters of racial justice. In that regard, I expect to collaborate this summer with our Diversity Committee, chaired this year by Professor Atiba Ellis and including Professors Kali Murray and Dan Blinka, about ways in which it makes sense for us as a school to proceed. You also are welcome to offer your counsel to me—or to any of us on the faculty and staff of the Law School, including Deans Nadelle Grossman, Vada Waters Lindsey, Bonnie Thomson, and Anna Fodor. In the meantime, please know that you are part of a great university, deeply invested in each of you personally, that we care about your individual well-being, and that we are available to you to help in any way that we possibly can.

Sincerely,



Joseph D. Kearney

Dean and Professor of Law