



North Carolina Central University School of Law Statement on the Death of George Floyd

FROM THE DEANS

Elie Wiesel has been quoted as saying “We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormenter, never the tormented.” We, the interim dean and the incoming dean of North Carolina Central University School of Law (NCCU School of Law) write this statement because silence is not an option. We speak for people whose voices have been forever silenced by people who took a vow to protect and serve. The most recent three, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, lost their lives while during everyday activities---jogging, shopping, sleeping. We speak against police killings, pain, and persecution. We speak for patience, peace, and prosecution. We take the side of justice. We take the side of peace. We take the side of love.

FROM THE FACULTY AND STAFF

On behalf of the entire North Carolina Central University School of Law, we extend our sincere regrets and condolences to the family of George Floyd and to the people of Minneapolis who were impacted by his senseless death. We also deeply mourn for the families of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the many other members of our community, past and present, who have lost their lives at the hands of white police officers and vigilantes acting under the guise of the law.

This moment allows us, the NCCU School of Law Community, to once again reflect on our mission, history, and the role we, collectively and individually, play in the constant fight for justice. This School of Law was born out of racism and the view that African Americans were “less than.” These same conditions continue to lead to the devaluing of African American lives. Unwilling to allow African Americans to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the state’s law school at the time, NCCU School of Law was established in 1939 for the purposes of providing legal education for African Americans and maintaining segregation of the North Carolina University system.

Notwithstanding the racist origins, and indeed because of it, NCCU School of Law has as its mission the training of lawyers who are dedicated to serving the underserved and fighting against injustice in all areas of our society. We are committed to not just teaching the Black Letter Law,



James E. Shepard, Founder

but to teaching the full and accurate history of the impact that race has had on the law, the current reality of racial inequality in our justice system, and encouraging our students, faculty, graduates, and others to engage in robust efforts to achieve this nation’s guarantee of “Equal Justice” for all.

We are incredibly proud of our alumni, many of whom were not only the first lawyers in their families but were the first in their family to even graduate from college. We are extremely proud that many of our alumni are eagerly engaged in the necessary justice battles every day in the courthouse, in elective offices, and on the bench.

These most recent tragedies are unfortunately not unique in their occurrence. What is unique about this moment is that the collective outrage across all segments of our society provides additional momentum for concrete systemic change. This moment reminds us, the NCCU School of Law Family, that the work we all do is vitally important. It is, therefore, imperative that we remain steadfastly dedicated to our mission to prepare the next generation of lawyers as agents of change. As a tribute to Mr. Floyd and all other members of our community, known and unknown, who have tragically lost their lives at the hands of whites acting under the guise of the law, we will honor their lives by continuing the fight for the bona fide application of constitutional principles which should protect us all.