



Dear members of the Akron Law family,

On many recent Mondays, I have written to share good news about events at Akron Law. In light of the senseless, horrifying death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the expressions of pain and outrage that have followed, the tone of my message today is somewhat different.

Please know, first and most importantly, that each of you – every one of you – has value and is valued. Whatever divides us, we are all human beings, possessing basic human dignity and the right to be treated in accordance with that dignity.

Know also that each of you – each of us – has the power to enact positive change. I realize that it often doesn't seem that way. It often seems, in fact, that deep injustice persists no matter what we do; that protests and cries of pain go unheeded; that attempts to work within the system ultimately lead nowhere. I sometimes succumb to these feelings of despair myself, despite my personal good fortune and position of privilege. At those times, it helps me to think of the Serenity Prayer with which many of you are familiar:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

Although I am not myself a religious person, I find it comforting to realize that while there is much that I cannot control, there are some things that I can. I can control how I treat others with whom I interact – whether I afford them the human dignity and kindness they deserve. I can control how I comport myself as I move through the world. I can affect positive change within my own sphere of family, friends, and colleagues.

It comforts me also to remember that I am a lawyer, entrusted with special capacity and special responsibility to uphold the rule of law and help strengthen our democratic values. We cannot have true democracy – rule by the people – without the rule of law. True democracy is denied when a person's ability to control the circumstances of his, her, or their life is determined by arbitrary facts such as lack of wealth, membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, or special vulnerability to violence. Only the rule of law – a set of known, stable, and generally

accepted procedures and institutions that bind everyone equally – can prevent the arbitrary use of power that is the enemy of true democracy.

We are a very long way in this country and in this world from attaining true democracy. We may never completely achieve that goal. But if we are going to make progress toward it, as we must, we will need to strengthen the rule of law – in particular by making our legal systems more fair, just, and accessible to all. And that is the work of lawyers and of those who train lawyers. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” I believe this is true – but the moral arc does not bend by itself. It will take committed lawyers to push it in the right direction.

We are privileged to be lawyers, lawyers-in-training, or educators of lawyers. That privilege gives us power that others do not possess. We owe it to our communities, and to ourselves, to exercise our power in the service of justice. We must work to make the ideal of democratic government under law a reality for the many human beings to whom it is now denied. We really have no choice.

Thank you for the care you give to your families, your friends, your colleagues, your communities, and most importantly yourselves. Stay safe, stay well, and be kind to one another, as always.

CJP

Christopher J. (C.J.) Peters | Dean
C. Blake McDowell, Jr. Professor of Law
[The University of Akron School of Law](#)