



Dear Memphis Law Faculty, Staff, & Students,

Words fail. They are inadequate. They seem hollow. They cannot possibly convey the horror, the outrage, or the immense sadness experienced as we stand witness to the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police - one unarmed Black man among a long list of systemic racism's recent casualties. My perspective is flawed. It is also inadequate and incapable of accurately perceiving the depth of the fear and despair felt by Black members of our law school community. I am an inadequate vessel to deliver this message. But I am human, I have a voice, and it is my obligation to speak, despite my imperfections.

When I became dean of the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law less than a year ago, I publicly announced my commitment to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion in our community. Law schools play an essential role in addressing inequities and systemic racism in our country and our actions matter. Black leaders are grossly underrepresented as members of the bar. Without their voices representing the underprivileged, engaging in the criminal justice system, sitting on the bench, advancing policy, and informing thoughtful legal advice, we cannot advance justice. Without justice, we cannot restore peace to our streets or to the hearts of Black mothers and fathers who send their children out the door each day.

While we have focused on improving the culture of diversity and inclusion in our Memphis Law School community, we have not done enough and we must do much more. We will build, improve, and promote pipeline programs to encourage and prepare diverse high school and college students, as well as working professionals, for law school and careers in law, whether they choose to attend Memphis Law or another institution. We will maintain affordable tuition to increase access to legal education. We will prioritize the value of diversity in our hiring and promotion decisions. We will strategically invest in diversity programming and in diverse students. We will listen to diverse opinions and amplify Black voices. We will learn about our biases and work to consciously counter them.

As I watch protesters across the country marching to be heard, I am reminded of the National Civil Rights Museum and the many photos displayed there of women of color who dressed in their Sunday best before heading to protests they knew would lead them to be attacked by vicious dogs, to be stung with the blasts of firehoses, and to be arrested. They were immeasurably brave and proud. They voiced their outrage with dignity – not with words but

with actions. As I recognize that my words today will fail, I hope you will judge Memphis Law not by my words, but on our actions.

Best,

Dean Schaffzin