

Message from Dean Jerry L. Anderson

The brutal death of George Floyd, along with countless other incidents of racial injustice, has affected our Drake Law community profoundly. I know that many of us have had, and continue to have, a lot of anger, pain, frustration, grief, bewilderment, and many other strong emotions. I also know that, as a community knowledgeable about and deeply invested in the legal system, we have an enhanced responsibility to help our nation navigate this crisis.

I am old enough to remember the 1960s, which for many of you is ancient history. As a child, I witnessed the power of public demand for change and the significant progress that can occur in a democratic society when people come together. But here we are, 50 years later, knowing that great steps forward like the Civil Rights Act and other major reforms have not eradicated the problem of racism and inequality. We see over and over that the law alone is ineffective unless every citizen works to make the promise of law meet reality.

Here at Drake Law, I see many reasons for hope:

- I am proud of our students, who are finding a variety of ways to engage on this important problem and use their growing legal knowledge for good.
- I am proud that Drake Law started the *Institute for Justice Reform and Innovation* several years ago, focused on identifying and ameliorating systemic racial injustice in our legal system.
- I am proud of the work our clinical programs do, advocating for clients so often powerless and marginalized by this system, and training future lawyers to continue to make a difference.
- I am proud of the programs we have recently established, like the *Cady Fellows*, designed to increase the number of lawyers from underrepresented groups, so that those in power will better reflect our society.

But we know, also, that there is much more to do, both individually and as part of the Drake Law community.

I want to share a quote from author James Baldwin, brought to my attention by Dean Renée Hutchins of the University of the District of Columbia Law School:

“If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected – those precisely who need the law’s protection most – and listens to their testimony.”

With that in mind, I resolve to listen more to those who are different from me. I resolve to speak out more against oppression and injustice. And, I hope that our Drake Law community can find more ways to discuss these issues of racial justice and equality so that we can better prepare new lawyers who can be part of the solution. I plan to work with students groups, along with our Committee on Equity and Inclusion, in order to support and facilitate those goals.

Please know that we stand in solidarity with our students of color – we see you, we hear you, and we support you. We stand with all of those working to make positive change in our society. We share your abhorrence for the brutality inflicted on George Floyd and so many other victims of racial injustice. I hope that together we can continue this mission to make justice for all a reality for all.