



# EMORY

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# LAW

Dear Friends,

Last week, Atlanta's citizens joined in the protests, marches, and riots that unfolded in cities across the United States, fueled by the killing of another Black American by a police officer. George Floyd's death was a further blow and insult to Black citizens who were already disheartened by the recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, and the disproportionate toll of COVID-19 in their communities.

As a lawyer, law professor, and law dean committed to the central role that law can play in defining and achieving justice, it is difficult to see our nation's laws and systems fail those they were designed to protect. But it is even more devastating to recognize in the voices of anguished protestors the reality that those laws and systems have failed our Black citizens for decades. As lawyers and seekers of justice, we must uphold the rule of law and commit to challenge both inequities in its application and the abuse of power. And while I understand feeling heartbreak, anger, and dismay at the events currently unfolding throughout the country, I would ask you to channel those feelings into a commitment to achieve justice for all members of our society.

One of the great strengths of Emory Law's alumni is the diversity of your lives and beliefs. You serve across our society—as public defenders and in law enforcement, in legislatures and the courts, in corporations and public interest organizations, and in law firms of every size and description. Whatever your role, your degree gives you both power and responsibility to promote justice.

Each of us must define the justice we seek. For me, this must include recognizing, rejecting, and calling out the passive and active racism that leads to death sentences such as George Floyd's. We must embark upon not only honest dialogue but also action, which starts with refusing to ignore or tolerate racism of any kind, anywhere. I invite you to join me and, in doing so, to consider the inspiring example set by our students.

The day protests began in Atlanta, leaders from Emory Law's incoming Student Bar Association sent a letter to their fellow students. While these student leaders were clear-eyed in pointing out

the sorrows of our present moment, they also saw the opportunity to act. Their message gave me and many of my colleagues great hope, and I include an excerpt below:

SBA is an anti-racist organization. Rather than being *passively* not racist, we are dedicated to *actively* supporting the diverse body of Emory Law students. This means we will provide resources, be honest when we hear, see, and experience racism, and address our own internalized prejudices. Race and race politics were and are a part of Emory's legacy as a school in the Deep South in a civil rights capital of America. As law students and future legal professionals, it is our responsibility to understand what role we can play in creating a just society and combating the injustices impacting marginalized communities.

The SBA's letter also launched a newly formed committee to create educational, anti-racist programming for the Emory Law community. [You may read the entire letter here.](#) These student leaders have my full support and, where authorized and appropriate, we will assist in making this programming accessible to the entire Emory Law community, including our alumni.

Students often look to our alumni when they envision their hopes and dreams. So it is wonderful to share with you, in return, their hope and confidence in law's power to deliver justice. They have been able to draw on other powerful examples, including [Associate Professor Fred Smith's eloquent editorial on recent events](#) and the riveting and passionate Emory University [commencement speech by Bryan Stevenson](#). Both demonstrate how we can move forward while not forgetting past lessons and sacrifice. I encourage you to read and to hear these calls to action.

Emory Law is a part of a larger university that is equally committed to acting in the face of injustice. You have already received an invitation from Emory President Claire Sterk to join us in an [online solidarity vigil](#) tomorrow at 4 p.m. EDT to remember victims of racist violence. I'll be there, and I hope you will join me.

With best regards,

Dean Bobinski

Dean Mary Anne Bobinski  
Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Law  
Emory University School of Law