



As I have watched and read in horror and sorrow the news over the last week since George Floyd died in police custody, I have come to the realization that I must speak out to our Coastal Law Community. Florida Coastal has long prided itself on serving the underserved and focused on recruiting a diverse student body. As a leader, I now realize that I must do more than point to data and mission statements to truly serve the underserved and to address systemic racism. I must take action and not be silent when basic rights, liberties, and lives are undermined and extinguished by those in authority. I must take action and not be silent when I see intolerance, injustice, and discrimination right in front of me. I must take action to inspire our students and our community to be committed to and embrace the Rule of Law.

Let me state first, as a white male, I can never fully understand what my colleagues, students and friends of color feel and experience every day of their lives. But I can be a voice and attempt to be a change agent in support of those in our community whose experience is not the same as mine. I can and do say that black lives matter.

Second, I believe as an attorney and legal educator I have a special duty and responsibility to speak out against injustice and inaction by our leaders. It is time for our leaders and elected officials of all political parties and persuasions at the local, state and national level to take action to unite us and to focus all of us on guaranteeing we have a society where there is justice for all. This to be done with civility and equality. It has to be done with dialogue and with listening to one another. We have to step out of our comfort zones. I have to step out of my white comfort zone.

Third, we must encourage those wanting change to exercise one of the most important rights that we have—the right to vote. Change such as what we need now must start at the local level where the police chief is often appointed by an elected mayor or an elected police board. It must start at the state level where policies that directly impact equal access to healthcare and clean water are legislatively enacted. I particularly encourage Millennials and Gen Z's to exercise your right to vote.

Finally, history has shown us that at times nonviolent protest is necessary to initiate needed change and correct inequities. Violence and destructive chaos is inconsistent with that type of protest and cannot be tolerated or condoned. That kind of action does not achieve the unity, freedom and justice required of a society grounded in the concept that all people are created equal. That type of action denigrates the memory of George Floyd.

I pledge that I will continue to do what I can to promote education and change in our profession and society. I will be facilitating programs and opportunities for conversation and learning involving influential members of all corners of the Jacksonville community this fall to discuss race, injustice and opportunities for change—regardless of whether we are live or virtual.

We can do better. Please be safe and healthy.

CPG