

**Office of the Dean**

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School of Law

**Passion Into Practice.**

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Dear Gonzaga Law Students, Faculty & Staff:

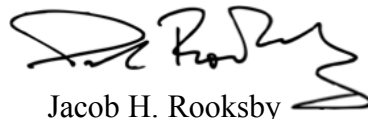
This past week has been exceptionally challenging as we process and reflect on the realities of racial violence and systematic oppression as manifested by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. His tragic death—compounded by the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and so many other innocent people of color around our country—has rightfully sparked widespread anger, sadness, and frustration. Like our University President and Provost and Senior Vice President, I grieve with all of you outraged by these horrifying atrocities.

I am reminded in this dire moment of Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, who visited Gonzaga University in February as part of a program sponsored by our own Center for Civil & Human Rights. She shared the following observation with us during her talk: “What is happening on the national level we can’t always control. But, we can control what is in our backyard.” Her words, combined with recent events, remind us that we have work to do right here, within Spokane and our own law school, to dismantle structures that perpetuate racism and oppression, inequity and bias.

Our Jesuit, humanistic identity should inform our path forward. A fundamental tenant of Ignatian pedagogy is that we meet people where they are, walking in solidarity with those who are marginalized and disenfranchised. With this commitment comes the need for concrete action, not just lofty rhetoric. I invite your suggestions as to how we might more fully realize our promise as an educational institution—as a place of hope, tolerance, and support for all individuals, where everyone feels the safety to simply be themselves.

As a learning community committed to justice, we must seize this historical moment to work together in finding solutions that will foster a more equitable society for all. And that work starts in our own backyard.

Black lives matter,



Jacob H. Rooksby