



Dear Students:

Tragically, once again the issue of racism and the criminal justice system has exploded violently across the country. First and foremost, we are writing to express our sadness and to let each of you know that your law school stands ready to support you if you need us. Counseling services are available, and we urge you all to be there for each other as well. Particularly for our African-American students, who may be experiencing a loss of a sense of well-being, please know that we support you.

This law school's mission statement is unequivocal – an excellent legal education requires an exploration of “the relationship between law and social inequality.” For many years, both in our classes and in our co-curricular programming, we have examined the impact of racism on the criminal justice system. We have hosted programs on mass incarceration, prosecutorial discretion, and bail reform, just to name a few; and we have heard from academics, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials, ex-offenders, defense lawyers, community activists, and others. These programs were designed in part to speak to the urgency of race relations in our country and the injustices that continue to hold back black, indigenous, and people of color. They are a manifestation of our responsibility as a law school and an institution of higher education to shine a light on and explore injustice.

What happened and is happening in Minnesota is of particular relevance to lawyers and law students because it is an example of the persistence and consequences of the problem. Even law enforcement leaders are condemning the actions of the police officers that resulted in the death of George Floyd. The ensuing violence is also worthy of condemnation. As lawyers, we trust in non-violent means to address society's ills. Everybody is losing in Minneapolis, Columbus, Louisville, Denver and other cities wracked by violence overnight.

Our hearts go out to all who have been impacted by these tragedies, but that sadness is accompanied by the faith that we (and you) can and will help make a difference.

Best,

Michael  
Gregory Bowman, Dean-Designate and Professor of Law  
Ralph Tavares, Director of Diversity and Outreach