



Dear GW Law Community,

The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Philando Castille, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and many others weigh heavy on us all as we witness unprecedented levels of civil unrest across the nation. This unrest stems from an unshakeable perception that there is a profound disconnection between our nation's professed ideals of equality under law and the reality of devastating modes of racial oppression operating not only within our nation's police departments, but throughout our local, state and national political offices. As a scholar of constitutional law and American race relations, I know this story all too well.

As I have written previously, there is a rhythm to the destruction of black lives by American law enforcement. There is the episode of brutality that strikes at the core of our humanity, followed by the outpouring of emotion – anger, sadness, outrage, guilt, and fantasies of retribution. This emotion mutates into cries for justice that, when met with systemic inaction, devolve into the tacit acceptance of the status quo and deepened sense of racial resentment. And with the inevitable next episode of brutality, the cycle begins anew. This is not a cycle of recent vintage, but has defined the struggle of African Americans to overcome more than 400 years of white supremacy and the mendaciousness of systemic racism in this country.

These incidents remind us of the critical role that lawyers play in advancing the cause of social justice, and the essential role that law faculty serve to inspire future generations to protect our cherished democracy and the rule of law. As faculty, students, staff and residents of one of the premier proving grounds for legal professionals in the nation's capital, we – the GW Law Community – are fundamentally aware that lawyers and legal professionals are the caretakers of civil society, and American society needs us now more than ever. We are profoundly aware that law and legal action, whether the electoral process, legislation, or litigation, is the most powerful disruptive force at our disposal to combat the most retrograde of societal impulses. As lawyers, colleagues of lawyers, and lawyers-to-be, we know that lawyers operate on the first and final frontier of transformative change in society.

I applaud the efforts of GW BLSA to provide insight and support to our students in this time of crisis. I am equally thankful to our faculty, staff, and alumni, who have extended a supportive hand to students and community members. You are not alone at this time. The GW Law community is here to support one another. My friend and colleague, Vice Provost for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Caroline Laguerre-Brown

and her team authored this inspirational letter to the community that I proudly endorse and encourage you all to read. In addition, there are several resources available. For those looking for ways to share their thoughts, the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement has created a tool for GW Community Reflections. For students, the GW Counseling and Psychological Services office has counselors available. GW University Employees who are experiencing distress can contact the Wellbeing Hotline: at (866) 522-8509 or visit <https://benefits.gwu.edu/wellbeing-hotline>.

We cannot turn a blind eye to what is happening within our country, its impact upon our community members, or its connection to the multi-generational arc of justice that shaped our nation's history. We must take this moment to engage – if not in protest, then in solidarity with the notion that we must preserve and protect the right to protest as an essential constitutional right that dates back to the founding of our nation.

I encourage each of you to take a moment to be introspective – to interrogate yourself and ask what more you might provide in service of social justice and our constitution. I also ask that you reflect upon what makes our GW Law community so special – namely, our ability to come together to support one another in times of crisis, to lift one another as we climb to new heights, and to serve as thought leaders in a world that looks to us for guidance.

These are challenging times, as we confront the social pandemic of racial inequality and the epidemiological pandemic of COVID-19. Let's continue to check in with each other, support one another, and take good care of ourselves as we not only work to restore our collective health, but continue the ongoing struggle to break the rhythmic cycle of the destruction of black lives and fulfill the promise of our nation's democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Bracey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Bracey" clearly distinguishable.

Christopher A. Bracey
Interim Dean and Professor of Law, GW Law
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, GW