



Dear Members of the UNM School of Law Community,

I believe that all humans should be treated with dignity and respect. Period. Because of that, I continue to think about last Monday's events in Minneapolis. The way George Floyd, like far too many others, died shakes my faith in the basic decency of many humans. His desperate cries for mercy were ignored. He was dehumanized and degraded. He was slowly and mercilessly killed.

The University of New Mexico School of Law stands unified in support of those demanding an end to racism and demanding justice. We reject the use of excessive force to disperse peaceful protestors. People need to be able to express their grief and anger at systemic racism. Our leaders must empathize with those who are crying out for justice. If leaders respect human dignity, they will communicate authentically with those suffering from these tragic events, and they will not attempt to suppress their voices.

Our country has a long, ugly history of racial and ethnic discrimination. It is tragic that racial violence reasserts itself over and over again in our society. It is a poison to our nation. At our law school, racism adversely affects our students, our faculty, and our staff. We are diminished if we refuse to acknowledge it and its impact on all of us. We must not stay quiet because to refrain from speaking up when it happens is to implicitly condone it.

Recent events have been extraordinarily stressful on all of us. I want to make it clear that our students, faculty, and staff of color have our full support. We are committed to creating a community where all feel supported and valued. I would encourage our students, faculty, and staff to engage in difficult conversations on diversity and inclusion with empathy. Faculty and staff, please listen, truly listen, to the lived experiences of our colleagues and students. Students, please listen, truly listen, to the lived experiences of professors, staff, and classmates.

To honor the memory of George Floyd and others who have been the victims of atrocities like this, we must take action. Our mission demands that we, as an institution, educate ourselves and our students to speak out against racism and racial violence. In addition, I ask for your direct input regarding productive ways that we can move forward. Please email any thoughts and suggestions that you might have directly to me at [pareja@law.unm.edu](mailto:pareja@law.unm.edu).

I want to end by thanking Professor Cliff Villa for taking the lead in organizing this Friday's virtual teach in on "Black Lives Matter." I also would like to thank the presenters, Leon Howard, Professor Maryam Ahranjani, Dean Emeritus Alfred Mathewson, Professor Josh Kastenberg, Professor George Bach, and Professor Sonia Gipson Rankin. Racism has plagued our nation and communities for far too long. We must all work together to put an end to it.

Sincerely,

Sergio Pareja  
Dean & Professor of Law