

BerkeleyLaw

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Dear Law School Community,

I hope that this message finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe. I know that the last week has been a particularly difficult one. The death toll in the United States from COVID-19 exceeded 100,000. We learned that 40 million people have lost their jobs. We saw the horrifying death of yet another unarmed African-American man, George Floyd, at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. We have witnessed violence in cities across the country. The words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, are so apt: “Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

We, as a Law School, have a special role and responsibility to play in ensuring justice. We must loudly condemn the racism that is reflected in the much greater toll of COVID-19 on communities of color and the continued police brutality and violence directed at African-Americans. We must express solidarity with our students, staff, and faculty of color for whom this is especially difficult. We must speak out against the great economic inequalities, especially along racial lines, in our society. We must provide education on these issues within our Law School and to the broader community. As a small step in that direction, we will have a program on race and policing, featuring our faculty, likely on Monday, June 8. We must work hard for solutions, through the law and the legal system, to these deep-seated problems.

Our knowledge, our tools, and our privilege impose on us an obligation to study and learn about all of this, but also to act. We are the profession responsible for justice. And we must echo the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

Especially at this very difficult time, I hope we can draw strength from our community at Berkeley Law and support each other in every possible way.

Warm regards,

Erwin