



Dear CAS Community,

Like so many, I am hurt, angered, and broken by the recent death of George Floyd coming after so many others at the hands of police brutality. As I watch the protests and response in various communities, I both feel and understand the rage. The moment is so important that it has brought people out in the streets during a pandemic. Their need to be heard has led them to risk an illness that has disproportionately devastated poor and marginalized communities.

Sadly, we have seen this before. In 2014, at the death of Eric Garner, as a lifelong New Yorker, I wrote an Op-Ed in the New York Daily News in which I said “The heartbreak of Eric Garner's death ... brought people of all races and classes out into the streets in grief, disbelief and anger to demand change....” Little has changed but the name and the city in the six years between two senseless deaths that number among many more. These patterns go back centuries. There is a history here that we should all learn.

At this time, I mourn for our nation, for the Floyd family, and for all those who suffer at the heavy hand of injustice. Those who suffer are our neighbors. This inherited, and deeply entrenched, pattern of violence diminishes the humanity of each one of us. In the Gospel of Mark, we learn that one of the greatest commandments is “to love your neighbor as yourself.” Yet we have not shown our love. At crucial moments, we have remained silent and passive. The problems facing our world require action and attention from all of us.

At this moment of national grief, I write to support you, and to remind you of the special gifts you each possess in a world that urgently needs them. Some of you possess the critical acumen to lay bare these patterns that have so paralyzed the progress of justice in our nation; others of you have grown adept at researching the unconscious biases or unjust policies that remain uninterrogated in our own legal structures and personal



speech and action. Still more of you, through the creative and performative arts, articulate the points of protest or call into being the voices that are and will always embody the better angels of our nature. Many among you do this work while you raise—and at this moment, educate—the next generation of citizens that will inherit the democracy you fight to improve.

As a first-generation college graduate, I know the power of education to change individual lives. As a member of our CAS community, I pledge to work more deliberately and intentionally to create a better world, to work harder, smarter, and with neighborly love. I am grateful to be part of an institution of higher learning that was founded on the Ignatian principles of love for all, and heartened to find myself among you who inspire me with your works and actions each and every difficult day. I remain hopeful as I trust you do that I can gain strength from Fairfield University's mission and work to instill our values more firmly within our community so that each of us may continue to embrace the responsibly to be the change the world needs.

Sincerely,

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