

Dear Stanford Community,

We write this evening with heavy hearts as we witness the senseless acts of violence perpetrated against Black communities. The tragic loss of lives – those of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and before that, the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and Sean Reed – due to racial violence is deeply saddening and a stain against the values that we personally hold, and that Stanford, as an institution, cherishes.

These horrific recent events are, sadly, not isolated events. They represent systemic issues of racism, inequality and injustice that have plagued our social fabric across history. We condemn this history and present reality and ask all to join us in seeking racial justice and an end to the brutality that oppresses and traumatizes Black communities.

The fact that these horrific acts have occurred in the midst of a pandemic are a double blow. They cause additional pain and grief at a time when we are dealing with so many other challenges. But the shameful reality is that the virus has disproportionately affected our country's communities of color. It has laid bare the inequities of our healthcare system and made painfully clear how those who have suffered so many other injustices for so long must also unequally bear the burden of this disease. These acts of racism and hatred we have witnessed in the last few weeks bring into even greater relief that sense of injustice.

More than 50 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about these issues at Stanford in his speech "[The Other America](#):"

And the great tragedy is that the nation continues in its national policy to ignore the conditions that brought the riots or the rebellions into being. For in the final analysis, the riot is the language of the unheard....And the fact is that justice is indivisible; injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

The violence we witness today arises from our painful legacy of racial injustice embedded in our most vital social structures. It is not an issue that impacts our Black community alone. It impacts all of us. Indeed, it is an assault on our shared humanity. Ending this violence requires not only constant vigilance, but a united stance against racism and hatred in all its forms.

As a community, we will continue to seek ways to be defined by what unites us rather than what divides us. In the last year, we have worked with our student, faculty and staff communities of color to find ways to better support them. We have a long way to go but we are committed to making progress through specific actions. This includes using the university's intellectual resources and wellspring of talent to further address social inequity, and through our research and teaching, advance public policy changes and much needed social reform.

As always, please remember that there are support systems available to you on campus even if you are physically elsewhere. We are here to help in these extraordinarily difficult times.

Even if we are physically separated, we stand with you in support and solidarity.

Persis Drell, Provost

Susie Brubaker-Cole, Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Tiffany Steinwert, Dean for Religious Life