

Message from the Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion

June 4, 2020

The Other Pandemic

Dear Baruch Community,

We, the members of the Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, are saddened and outraged by the senseless death of George Floyd and support those who have bravely spoken out against it. George Floyd is tragically but one in a long line of those who have lost their lives in the “land of the free” due to nothing more or less than the color (blackness) of their skin. From Freddie Gray to Michael Brown to Tamir Rice to Sandra Bland to Breonna Taylor to Eric Garner to Amadou Diallo to Rodney King, people of color (and black men in particular) have borne and continue to bear the brunt of the racism and racist violence that pervades our culture. We condemn such violence in all of its forms.

As Frederick Douglass once wrote of the abolitionist movement, “It is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.”

Like today’s protesters, Douglass was also hurt, frustrated, and angry and believed that the pandemic of injustice that had pervaded this country was so deeply embedded that negotiating a righteous outcome with those who sat comfortably in power was simply not possible. In the current deadly COVID pandemic, we see tens of thousands of peaceful protestors risking their lives to cry out against the injustice that continues to pervade our society. We understand and empathize with the protesters’ pain, frustration, and anger and note historical precedent for their actions. Indeed, a century and a half has passed since the 13th amendment was ratified and yet, as George Floyd’s death reminds us all, the racial divides that plagued us in

Douglass' time continue to plague us today. It was for this reason that Dr. King advocated change by peaceful means, arguing that "returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars."

We close this statement by noting that, in response to his brutal beating at the hands of white police officers in 1991, Rodney King simply asked, "Can't we all just get along?" We believe that we can, but only if we all accept that the pandemic of injustice that has plagued our nation for centuries is unacceptable, and agree to engage one another in civil, impassioned, spirited discourse.

We the undersigned are here at Baruch because we believe that this school is an engine for social mobility – which is essential to the equitable society we seek. This Council is committed to creating a culture of support for the Baruch community that stands against racism and discrimination in all forms. Baruch's incoming president, Dr. S. David Wu has reaffirmed the College's commitment to action in his message titled [A Time for the Baruch Community To Come Together](#). The initial charge of the Council is to listen to the community, and in listening we are generating the base of information we need to build a culture of support and equality for every member of the College community.

Respectfully,

The members of the Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion

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- Leslie Ann Hunt, Director of Graduate Programs, Weissman School of Arts and Sciences

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