



NOTRE DAME LAW SCHOOL BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

“It is impossible to be unarmed when our blackness is the weapon that they fear”

- Shamell Bell, Black Lives Matter Activist

Dear Members of the Notre Dame Law School Community,

For hundreds of years, Black people’s lives have been uniquely subjugated by the racial injustices in our society. Over the past several months, racial disparities have been emphatically visible as the Black community has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. As we have battled the global pandemic, we have borne witness to the callous killings of too many Black lives in a matter of weeks. In 2020, we still cannot encounter the police, jog in plain daylight, birdwatch, or simply exist in our home without risking our lives. These events illuminate the conundrum many Black people face when balancing their hope for freedom with their need for safety.

The call to action across the world, our country, and our communities in response to this violence against the Black community has in many ways been unprecedented. What is abundantly clear is that now is the time for transformative action—real, sustained, specific action—to end systemic racism and injustice in our country. To echo the [message](#) of Dean Cole, George Floyd could not breathe, but we can, and because of that, we must act by addressing and acknowledging America’s truth. The truth is that racism is destroying us all. It is systematic and institutionalized, it has lasted for centuries, and it concerns all of us. The road ahead will be long and hard, but it is incumbent upon us all to challenge the status quo and help create an equitable system for all.

Dean Cole tasked us to join him in changing the world for the better. As a response, BLSA will promote legal platforms and organizations that support the voice of Black people and the decriminalization of Black skin, such as Black Lives Matter and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. As such, BLSA, along with various on-campus student organizations, has compiled a list of resources you can find [here](#) so you can help us achieve this goal. But we recognize that we must do more—we must address inequality within our own community and law school. We call on you to use your agency and actively fight for true Black equality both within our campus community and our broader society.

First, we challenge the law school faculty and students to support academic and curricula reforms. History is replete with systematic disenfranchisement of Black communities, yet, many times, it is not acknowledged in our casebooks. Furthering our

education on the interaction of racial injustice and the law will ensure that we understand and address the inequalities created by our legal institutions. As professors, this means you should cultivate and encourage those conversations in your classrooms, adopt additional courses that address issues of race and inequality, and encourage the implementation of a yearly symposium focused on the intersection of race and the law. As students, this means we must ask for classes that prepare us to address systemic racial disparities and seek to take advantage of those courses already offered.

Second, we would like for you to participate in conversations centered on privilege and implicit bias. Understanding the former will help address the latter. BLSA will actively advocate for the implementation of training to help recognize privilege and prevent implicit bias while providing a forum to engage in these conversations. We encourage you all to participate in those discussions. Our goal is to equip you with the necessary tools for disentangling racism and, ultimately, to change the legal landscape in our country.

We, the members of the Notre Dame Law School Black Law Students Association, are hurting, but we refuse to stop fighting for change. We will channel our feelings and fatigue into something beautiful—a more just world. We ask that you join us in that effort. If we all work together, we can give new meaning to being “A Different Kind of Lawyer.”

Naomi Price
BLSA President

This statement is endorsed by the following Notre Dame Law School clubs: National Lawyers Guild, American Constitution Society, Women’s Legal Forum, Asian Law Students Association, Hispanic Law Students Association, LGTB Law Forum, Public Interest Law Forum, Notre Dame Exoneration Project, American Civil Liberties Union.