



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

June 1, 2020

Dear CBU Community:

As a Lasallian community, we have witnessed countless occasions these past several months where the COVID-19 crisis has illuminated the very best of our shared humanity and many selfless acts of kindness carried out in support of each other.

This past week, however, the tragic death of George Floyd has compelled us to also confront how we, as a nation, continue to fall far too short of the goal of a fair, equitable, and inclusive society in America. Any attempt to make sense of Mr. Floyd's death is a futile exercise as it was both utterly senseless and totally unjustifiable. Growing up in Camden, New Jersey, my family witnessed firsthand the similar use of police force against persons of color which resulted in occasions of great civil unrest in my hometown in both 1969 and 1971. Sadly, it appears that we have made little, if any, real or sustained progress over the last five decades.

Right now, many of us may be feeling a wide range of emotions in the wake of what happened in Minneapolis last week. Great sorrow. Heartfelt pain. Righteous anger. Ongoing frustration. Real confusion. A sense of helplessness. Our present isolation from each other has likely only served to deepen and exacerbate these feelings.

While we may be physically removed from each other at present, you should know that we remain there for each other as a Lasallian community and, if you should feel the need for any support or guidance at this time, I would encourage you to reach out to Counseling Services, Campus Ministry, the Chief of Staff & Executive Director of Inclusive Excellence, and/or CBU's Employee Assistance Program.

In the midst of the current pandemic, I often have been asked when will things return to "normal." While like you I long for the days we can gather again on campus as a community, it is well past time that we reject a status quo where the Black community and those from other traditionally marginalized groups regularly experience injustices because of their race or identity. According to a 2019 study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, police use of force is among the leading causes of death for young men of color. As such, what happened to George Floyd is a very real fear faced by many within our own campus community every day of their lives. For them, and for each other, we must continue to strive even harder to make our world a better and more equitable place for all.

As a campus community, Christian Brothers University has long been committed to advocating for racial equality, social justice and human dignity for all persons. Fostering a supportive, inclusive, and equitable community is at the very core of who we are as Lasallians. We are here to support all members of our community — regardless of race, gender, or faith — and, now more than ever, we must be a model in doing so for our nation and our society.

In my role as president, I am committed to facilitating a deeper and broader campus conversation about the issues raised by the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Atatiana Jefferson, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and far too many other persons of color across our nation.

My hope is that, together and by association, we can continue to engage in a thoughtful and constructive dialogue that is healing in its processes and outcomes; exhibits humility and honesty in its exchanges; and draws from our common humanity and Lasallian principles. I want to recognize that many of you have been actively engaged in work to promote understanding and equity in our

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community. In this time I believe it is critical to do all we can and so in the coming days I will be bringing together individuals from across campus to facilitate a dialogue in which we all can participate. Having such a candid and reflective conversation about matters of race and equity is not easy. However, I believe that it is a discussion from which we can learn a great deal from each other and, knowing what I do of our CBU community, I believe that we will emerge from it an even stronger and more caring body that can be a shining beacon to others.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Shannon

President of the University

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