



Firebirds,

I write to let you know that your law school stands with you in this moment. Where we are is not okay. Where we are feels unbearable. But, we will get through this, together.

James Baldwin once wrote, “if one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policemen, the lawyers, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected – those precisely who need the law’s protection most – and listens to their testimony.” The testimony we are listening to is a testimony of rage, frustration, and despair. The names of the victims become heartbreakingly familiar – and too painfully numerous to list. Black Americans are killed by the police at a rate *more than double* that of white Americans. Latinx Americans are killed at a rate *nearly double* that of white Americans. And these numbers don’t include those who were killed by other methods or who died in police custody or who were killed by vigilantes cloaked in the mantle of law enforcement and white privilege. At the same time the nation struggles ineffectually with a global pandemic the health and economic impacts of which have landed more severely on black and brown communities, city after city goes up in flames as residents struggle to give voice to the justifiable fury engendered by unspeakable acts of violence against unarmed black men and women over and over and over again.

But, beyond bearing witness to that rage, beyond becoming consumed by it, let us remember the ability of lawyers to protect those who have for too long gone unprotected. Now, more than ever, you must believe in the fierce urgency of the education you are receiving and the tremendous power of the degree you are working towards.

UDC Law was founded to combat systemic injustice. It was founded to nurture in its graduates the firm conviction that the law must be used to fight oppression – to give voice to the voiceless.

Bryan Stevenson has said that “hopelessness is the enemy of justice.” Let us not now become hopeless. It is always darkest before the dawn. But UDC Law will continue to stand with you in the hard work of dismantling injustice. Take care of yourselves. Take care of each other.

In solidarity,
RMH

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