

An Important Message to our Community

As we continue to witness national incidents of violence and police brutality against Black people in the United States, the School of Law would like to take a moment to reach out and reaffirm our stance against the cruel and systematic injustices that have a devastating effect on Black Americans.

Over the past few months there has been no shortage of distressing news. In addition to the disparate health impacts presented by COVID-19 on Black Americans, we have been confronted with news regarding the racial profiling of Christian Cooper and the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Nina Pop, George Floyd, and many others. It has been difficult to watch the number of unarmed Black people killed by police brutality and racially motivated violence grow. It has also been difficult to witness the crisis of violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people, particularly transgender women of color, be ignored.

There are no words to sufficiently articulate the compounded emotional toll of times like this. As always, the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff remain our priority. We are encouraging open communications with our law school community regarding the impact of these events, and we are working with the University to provide support through community listening sessions and counseling opportunities.

Our Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has launched a new webpage providing resources and tools to help promote a diverse and inclusive environment at our law school. [\[Visit Webpage\]](#) We are also in the process of compiling online resources for community members who wish to be part of our efforts to spread awareness and promote change.

On **Thursday, June 11, 2020**, at 3 p.m. the law school will host a panel discussion via Zoom titled *George Floyd, Race and Policing* featuring Prof. Luis Chiesa, Director of the Buffalo Criminal Law Center; Prof. Athena Mutua, Floyd H. & Hilda L. Hurst Faculty Scholar; and Prof. Anthony O'Rourke, Director of our Advocacy Institute. The panel is open to all members of our law school and University community and will address the ways in which law, policing and race intersect, especially in the context of the use of force by police against people of color. [\[Visit Calendar\]](#)

Additionally, the executive board leaders of our Black Law Students Association have collaborated with our Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Tolu Odunsi, to participate in community leadership talks facilitated by Mayor Byron Brown and Shatorah Donovan '12, Chief Diversity Officer for the City of Buffalo, to discuss pathways forward to criminal justice reform in Buffalo, New York.

Beyond these initiatives, we know that our greatest asset in educating future attorneys to act as champions for justice and agents of change is the support of our community. We recognize and understand that remaining silent about the violence and threats to the lives and well-being of Black people is to be complicit in that violence and those threats. We ask that all members of our law school community join us by taking the time to truly understand individuals' very real struggle for justice and by openly and unequivocally rejecting any and all forms of systematic racism and transphobia.

Everyone in our community deserves to feel safe and valued. Our thoughts are with all individuals who have been impacted by these tragedies.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Aviva Abramovsky'.

Aviva Abramovsky
Dean and Professor of Law