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William & Mary Law School Office of the Dean

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Standing Together: A Message from Dean Davison M. Douglas

William & Mary Law School, Office of the Dean

June 7, 2020

To the Law School Community:

The brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer has shocked our nation. I am outraged at the senseless death of yet another unarmed black man who died while in police custody. Some may want to call this tragedy an aberration, but it is not. Violence towards black men has been a feature of American life for almost four centuries.

To our students in deep pain, I stand with you.

To our students who have experienced racism in their lives, I grieve with you.

And to those who want to continue the struggle against racism, I support you.

As former President Obama recently said, killing black men should not be normal in America. The sad truth is that racism is still very much with us. Our nation was founded on the principle of equality, but that vision has been repeatedly ignored. Centuries later we still have not fully dealt with that legacy. In fact, one of the central issues in American history is how a nation that was conceived in human liberty could justify its treatment of African-Americans. The simple answer is that we cannot.

I realize that I am not the best person to talk about racism because I have not experienced it. Rather, I have lived my life awash in the waters of white privilege. But I care deeply about racism in America, and I have spent much of my career trying to better understand how to effectuate racial change.

I know from speaking with many of you that you yearn for a more just society that confronts racism in all of its insidious forms. Don't give up. I welcome the opportunity to continue these discussions with you now, and when I return to the faculty in a few weeks.

Some of you have reached out to me to share your fear and anger. Please know, for those of you who are interested, William & Mary offers resources to guide us through this difficult time: the [Office of Health and Wellness](#), which includes the Counseling



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Center, the Office of Health Promotion, and the Center for Mindfulness & Authentic Excellence. The University also has a [virtual wellness site](#) and students may also make [requests for counseling](#).

Let us pledge together that we will confront the many strands of racism in our nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave". The letter 'D' is large and stylized, with the 'ave' written in a cursive script.

Davison M. Douglas
Dean and John Stewart Bryan Professor of Jurisprudence