

June 9, 2020

“Daddy changed the world.”

These four words spoken by George Floyd’s six-year-old daughter ring painfully, yet triumphantly true, for the worldwide protests surrounding her father’s death are resounding evidence that George Floyd will not become just another of the countless Black and Brown Americans whose lives have been cut short by systemic racism and its deadly effects. White supremacy, police brutality, and many other forms of physically and psychologically violent attacks on Black and Brown lives are tragic parts of a 400-year epoch in our nation’s history. However, these particular eight minutes and forty-six seconds are different, not just because George Floyd’s horrific murder was caught on camera, but because, for many, it exposed the brutal reality of America’s dark secret: the generations-long Black experience with racism in America, the “home of the free and land of the brave.” These particular eight minutes and forty-six seconds have awakened an empathetic courage long dormant in many, spurring people of all races, ethnicities, and orientations to take action to effect systemic change that benefits us all.

With a mix of sadness, anger, and concern, we, once again, bear witness to racism in the form of police brutality. We call upon our leaders to stand with us and all of you to enact meaningful legislation to ensure that victims and their families receive justice, to develop training for law enforcement that promotes de-escalation over violence, and to hold our leaders accountable to their oaths of office and to all the people they serve. Such measures are certainly overdue, and we can no longer normalize behaviors and actions that have put Black and Brown people in immeasurable danger and pain for far too long. The UVA IDEA Fund supports the protestors who continue to make all of our voices heard as we denounce racism in all of its many manifestations. The violent acts that resulted in the tragic deaths of Mr. George Floyd, Ms. Breonna Taylor, Mr. Ahmaud Aubrey, as well as so many others who died in silence--without the witness of a video camera--require all of us to understand that to be silent in the face of injustice is to be complicit.

The University of Virginia IDEA Fund Board of Trustees is an Alumni Interest Group committed to providing action-oriented leadership and support to University initiatives--in collaboration with the Office for Diversity Equity and Inclusion--to ensure that the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access permeate the University community and culture. Ten years ago, the IDEA Fund was created with the goal of making institutional change at our University--change that would also benefit our communities in Charlottesville and beyond.

Former and current Trustees believe that change means dismantling structural racism and all other forms of injustice and inequity. In the best tradition of creating sustainable change, we trustees of the UVA IDEA Fund will continue to speak out against racism and stand up and demand equity-oriented leadership. We hope that you will join us by standing up, speaking out, and demanding change.

Kevin J. Carrington
Chair, IDEA Fund Board of Trustees

cc:
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