

June 1, 2020

Dear MassArt Community,

Pain. Grief. Anxiety. Disgust. Anger. Rage. All fitting emotions in response to the killing of George Floyd. Just two weeks ago, we noted to our campus community acts of racism in our nation, including the murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia. Last week we learned of the racist incident involving Christian Cooper in New York City. And now this. Protests are occurring in our city and around the nation, with riots in many places. We grieve that people of color, in this case, the black community, once again bear the burden of our nation's continued failure to create a more just and equitable society.

If you find yourself wearied and burdened, so do I. But I, a white man of privilege, along with all my white colleagues and friends, don't experience weariness and burden in any way like those who are the targets of racism. We need to carry this burden more than we ever have. I have said on more than one occasion that we have for too long burdened people of color not only with systemic racism and discrimination, but we also inordinately burden people of color with the burden of solving these problems on their own. The stark truth is that we white people created the problem and it is on us to remedy it.

We know that where there is injustice there is no peace. We hope for justice to be done on behalf of George Floyd and his family, and we hope for peace to come to Minneapolis and our nation. Not the pretense of peace that occurs because we fail to notice the presence of conflict, but the kind of genuine peace that comes from the promise and pursuit of justice by those who are in power. We will fail if we simply allow this moment to fade away as so many moments before, and allow ourselves to think that things are "okay" or that things "aren't so bad." Now is not the time for the pretense of peace.

Our nation is in need of healing. Healing doesn't occur because things "quiet down." Healing doesn't come because we go on about our "normal" lives. We have for too long - far too long - lived with the horrid abnormality of racism as "normal." We need healing from all that. Healing will come with change of people's hearts and change of the structures of oppression that run through our institutions and systems. Healing will come, along with the peace we long for, as we who bear so much privilege carry the burdens we have for too long placed on our black and brown colleagues, friends, and loved ones.

In this painful moment it is urgent that we remind ourselves that on our campus we have the shared value of pursuing "a just, compassionate, and equitable learning environment." We hope you'll join us not only in lamenting the racism that continues to plague our culture, and the violence that issues from it, but

that we will carry on the work that will make our cities and our nation more like the place we all want to live.

Among the things you can do right now is to acknowledge our national shame and communicate to those who feel the brunt of racism that you see and hear and care, and that you will commit to carrying the burden of setting things right. There are people in your sphere of influence who need to hear that you see and that you care. This is what it is to shape communities, economies, and cultures for the common good.

For any of you who need space and time to grapple with the very real pain of racism and inequity, we hope you will ask for help through our campus resources. Students are invited to contact the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) at counseling@massart.edu, and faculty and staff may contact Kathryn Oram (koram@massart.edu) in Human Resources. And for further guidance about ways to respond and act during these troubling times we share the resources below and MassArt's Office of Justice, Equity, and Transformation (JET) will be following up with more resources in the days to come.

With love and concern for you all,

David Nelson
President

RESOURCES

For All Community

- [Adderley Lecture 2019: Dr. Cornel West](#)
- [Where Love Meets Justice](#)
- [Black Lives Matter](#)

Faculty/Staff

- [Critical Racial & Social Justice Education: White Fragility](#)
- [Cornel West Library Guide](#)
- [21 Day Racial Equity Building](#)