

GAPABA Statement in Support of Black Lives Matter

Recently, another series of killings of Black Americans have thrown a living match on the powder keg of increasing racial divide in this country. For us, lawyers of Asian American descent, we find ourselves asking: how do we respond as a community to the pain, suffering and anger of a different community of color?

Black Americans have experienced centuries of racism and oppression in the United States. The idea that the Asian American community is not affected by the mistreatment of Black communities lies at the root of a great fallacy. The Asian Pacific American experience of racism and injustice is different from the racism experienced by Black Americans. But we respond today, not just because we are one community of color allying ourselves with another, but because issues of injustice in the United States affect everyone. In this country, we tend to sort issues into buckets of affinity; this is a Black problem, and that is an Asian problem. Even though these events have again highlighted the great tragedy of fear and violence particularly directed towards Black and Brown Americans, these problems belong to all of us because they burden all of us. It is time for all Americans to claim these issues as our own because they can only be solved through collective action.

We are also spurred to speak out because we are a bar association, each of us sworn to uphold the law. We acknowledge the anger of our brothers and sisters, but as a bar association, we support channeling that anger towards dialogue and engagement. To quote Bryan Stevenson, the great civil rights lawyer, "hope is our superpower, violence is rooted in despair." History has proven that permanent progress on social justice, while slow, does result from the actions of lawmakers, judges and other legal practitioners. The law does respond to the will of the people, expressed through mass civil protest. Many of our members have been out on the streets, adding their voices to those calling for change. Many of our members will be on the front lines litigating on behalf of victims, advocating for new laws and adjudicating cases. We are proud of their efforts, and we salute you all.

As an organization, we not only speak our support, we are spurred to action. In the coming months, we will be partnering with organizations to provide pro bono services on behalf of Black and Brown communities. In addition, we commit to hosting a virtual event during which our members can have a dialogue with community leaders involved in social justice efforts for Black Americans. Please look out for these events and communications in the near future. We ask that you add your voice and your energies to these efforts.

In the meantime, stay safe and be well.

Your GAPABA Board and Committee Chairs