

University of Louisville Community
Re: CODRE Statement

Dear University of Louisville community:

The question is whether good people can observe and accept atrocious and heinous acts and remain under the shelter of the definition of "good" if they do nothing.

In all of the complexities of life, each of us has a basic litmus for what is right and what is wrong - it is as simple as asking yourself, "What would I expect as fair or just if this thing happened to me - my spouse - my child?" This exploratory exercise cuts through flimsy justifications or suppositions to the basics of what is "right" and what is "wrong", what is fair and what is just.

For 400 years African Americans have been betrayed by the promise of the supposed intentions of America.

The vile atrocities and terror of the theft of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters - kidnapped from their homes, stolen from their communities - enslaved, forced to work, to be raped, to be beaten, to be separated, to submit, to be murdered - was artificially draped in the gentility of the South...as if a spritz of magnolia perfume could overwhelm the stench.

So grotesque is this reality that even, hundreds of years later, many continue to invest heavily in the creation of elaborately contrived screens to block their eyes from their beneficiary status and generations of complicity. Then as now, purporting to be confused by the "What" and the "Why" - refusing to acknowledge obvious wrongs tested with the simple litmus of, "were this for me would it be ok?" - 'good people' risk the promise of America with silence in a way that is nearly as egregious as those who openly assault it with racism, bigotry and hate. Bad actions and injustice cannot be legitimized by good people.

For African Americans the promises of liberty and justice have been, and continue to be, contaminated with lack of accountability, double standards, flagrant abuses of civil and human rights - and even murder. The hard-fought repeal of legal oppressions have been replaced with more subtle, but equally effective, methods engineered to deny equitable access to the privileges afforded by our country's constitution and judicial systems.

African Americans are mentally and physically exhausted from the familiar dread of incident after incident after incident after incident - each confirming that in this country, perhaps in our Commonwealth and in our community, African American pain, African American lives, African American losses have less value.

White skin is a safe shelter that no amount of wealth, education, or societal contribution can construct for people of color - particularly African Americans.

The harshness of truth and glaring injustice is bitter and unappealing - there is no metaphorical perfume that can quell the stench of the blood of Jonathan Ferrell - Botham Jean - Atatiana Jefferson - Ahmaud Arbery - Renisha McBride - Stephon Clark - Jordan Edwards - Alton Sterling - Jordan Davis - Aiyana Stanley-Jones - Tamir Rice - Michael Brown - Trayvon Martin - Sean Bell - Oscar Grant - Sandra Bland - Corey Jones - John Crawford III - Philando Castile - Terence Crutcher - Keith Lemont Scott - Clifford Glover - Amadou Diallo - Claude Reese - Randolph Evans - Yvonne Smallwood - Walter Scott - Eric Garner - Freddie Gray - Breonna Taylor - George Floyd...the list is sadly much longer.

The UofL Commission on Diversity and Racial Equality supports the non-violent engagement of ALL members of our campus community to eradicate bias, discrimination, environmental conditions, and practices that support and sustain inequity. We strongly encourage empathy and compassion from members of our campus community for those hardest hit and suffering from the unrelenting din of senseless brutality and murder of people whose circumstances had less to do with their actions and more to do with the physical attributes of their African American faces.

Over the next several weeks, indeed into the rest of this school year, there will be programs and town halls to support healing, learning and exploration of issues impacted by racial discrimination, disparities and privilege. In the past these programs have been primarily attended by those experiencing marginalization and by consistent, but small, numbers of allies. Noticeably absent are critical masses of the majority population on our campus, those who occupy the spaces of privilege and influence, and who can most readily lead the evolution to a more just and equitable society, beginning with our own institution. We challenge you who least understand these issues to commit to investing time and effort in broadening your understanding and engagement in the work to lead our community closer to the full American Dream of liberty and justice for all.

The question is whether good people can observe and accept atrocious and heinous acts and remain under the shelter of the definition of "good" if they do nothing. The first step in fixing any problem is acknowledging that it exists.

We believe that our Cardinal Principles can lead us to new levels of investment in a better tomorrow when those who can affect change commit to doing so.

The Commission on Diversity and Racial Equality respectfully requests that all members of the University take action to better position our beloved institution to meet the challenge to more fully and successfully achieve our potential for inclusion, equity and equality.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the CODRE Executive Committee
J.P. Mohsen, Chair