

From: [Schwartz, David](#)
Subject: retweet: Our lives begin to end when we become silent
Date: Saturday, May 30, 2020 3:38:05 PM

Dear Friends and Colleagues.

I've been writing regular emails about the Covid-19 pandemic because it's been the focus of our lives for the past several months and continues to create enormous challenges for us into the future. I'm now writing you about another challenge to our profession, namely the intolerance of diversity. Below are poignant thoughts regarding the senseless murder of people of color from our Diversity Leaders in the SOM. I feel compelled to provide a few thoughts of my own.

At this time of uncertainty, I want to remind you of our values. We value everyone's opinion and strive to foster a diverse department because diversity makes us stronger, more accomplished, and ultimately enhances the collective impact of our work. We also strive to address the health needs of a diverse patient population and understand all of the key drivers of disease. In fact, given the racial disparities in the prevalence and effect of Covid-19, it's abundantly clear that diversity in background, experience, and expertise is what's needed to address many of the challenges posed by our patients with Covid-19. As your chair, I want you to know that we'll do everything possible to support an inclusive environment that promotes equity, diversity, multiculturalism, and justice for all members of our department, as well as the community we serve. We'll continue to embrace an individual's right to be heard regardless of race, color, social class, status, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, or religious belief. Diverse voices are needed to solve the problems, meet the challenges, and establish the solutions to the complex scientific and health challenges that we repeatedly face, including the challenges of Covid-19. When I think about the careers of our trainees and faculty, I want to make sure we're providing the support needed to embrace an ever expanding vision of patient care, education, and research. My job is to make sure we promote an environment that supports each of you to reach your potential – your job is to define your uniqueness and remain proud of who you are. Let's continue to reach out, understand, embrace, and celebrate our differences, and fully understand the key drivers of health and disease.

We're privileged to be part of the medical and scientific professions, to be working in an incredible medical center, and to have each other as friends and colleagues. But privilege is coupled with responsibility. And as professionals focused on treating and understanding human health and disease, it's our responsibility to address the inequities in our society that lead to health disparities, including the recent murders of George Floyd, Atatiana Jefferson, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Eric Garner, and the unmet dreams of many others in our society. These injustices, and for that matter the violence of some of the protesters, undermine our work and are inconsistent with the values of our profession. As we have seen with Covid-19 in the outstanding Medical Grand Rounds (<https://youtu.be/FhefH4JKKYI>), race

and socio-economic differences matter. Let's make sure we recognize these drivers in thinking about the health needs of our patients, the distribution of disease in the communities we serve, and the interventions that are needed to improve human health and reduce the burden of disease.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. My very best wishes to you, your family, and your friends.

David

David A. Schwartz, M.D.
University of Colorado
12631 East 17th Avenue, B178
Aurora, CO 80045
Office: 303-724-1783
Cell: 919-824-9458
FAX: 303-724-1799
david.schwartz@cuanschutz.edu

May 29, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

We are a group of diversity leaders in the SOM, a collection of White, Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ individuals who have chosen to shine a light on injustices and advocate for the most vulnerable members of our community. We meet monthly and share best practices in how to support our students, increase diversity in our faculty and training programs; moreover, when something that crosses the line of what we consider just, we express our anger and heartbreak and develop strategies to ensure justice and equity are at the forefront of our academic missions.

In the midst of a global coronavirus pandemic we have united to bring scientific, clinical and community resources to bear. We must turn the same energy to another killer. Maya Angelou reminds us, *"The plague of racism is insidious, entering into our minds as smoothly and quietly and invisibly as floating airborne microbes enter into our bodies to find lifelong purchase in our bloodstream."*

The events of the past several months have again shaken our belief that the better angels of our nature will prevail. Last fall, Atatiana Jefferson was shot in her home while playing video games with her nephew. Earlier this month, we were saddened and jolted, but not shocked, when a young Black man, Ahmaud Arbery, was killed while jogging in his own neighborhood; we were angered again by the death of Breonna Taylor, an aspiring nurse who was shot in her own home while sleeping. This week, George Floyd's brutal and graphic murder eerily punctuated with Eric Garner's final words in 2014, "I can't breathe," force us to speak out as a group in solidarity and disgust. Together as scientists, physicians and leaders in our communities it is impossible to sit silently. Our anger, sadness and defeat must translate into action, regardless of our politics, skin color or ethnicity. Our call to action to the students, faculty, residents and staff at Anschutz is to step up, speak up and intervene even if our voices shake, for it is only in just actions that we will start healing

some of the historical wrongs that our nation has imposed on minority communities.

"There comes a time when **silence** is betrayal. Our lives begin to end the day we become **silent** about things that matter. In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the **silence** of our friends. Only in the darkness can you see the stars." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We want to be the stars in this darkness. Be a star with us.

Members of the SOM Departmental Diversity Leadership:

Mona Abaza (Department of Otolaryngology)

Sonia Flores (Department of Medicine)

Brandi Freeman (Department of Pediatrics)

Cleveland Piggott (Department of Family Medicine)

Paul Rochon (Department of Radiology)

Stephanie Teal (Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology)

Kia Washington (Department of Surgery)

Regina Richards and Shanta Zimmer (SOM Office of Diversity and Inclusion)