

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)