

Hi everyone,

While I will be the first to admit that I have little authority to speak on the tragic events that have taken place across our country in these past few weeks, I do have a platform in my position as president of our class, and I feel as though I must not remain silent in this moment.

The criminalization and killing of innocent Black men and women at the hands of police brutality and white supremacy in our country is not new, but we have seen these harsh realities on display in particularly graphic fashion over the course of the past few weeks. With the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the dangers that racism and our militarized police pose to Black Americans in particular have been grossly apparent.

As future medical professionals, I hope that we can all take this moment to appreciate the interconnectedness of race and health. It is important that all of us are able to participate in conversations surrounding racism and structural inequality because these are the lived experiences of the patients we will be treating. It will be our duty to advocate for our most vulnerable patients and to treat the whole patient when they walk into our office, and it would be impossible to do these things effectively without recognizing and educating ourselves on the contexts from which our patients come to us.

Regardless of where we are each coming from ourselves, let us strive to be better each and every day so that we are a part of the solution to these structural ills that plague our country rather than a part of the problem.

To our Black classmates:

Please know that our class stands with you. We see you, we hear you, and we love you. I cannot imagine the additional burden that these recent events are placing on you in the midst of this time that is already so stressful and chaotic for us as medical students, but I know that you will persevere. Stay strong, and if there is anything that we can and should do as a class to support you, we will do it.

#BLM #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd #JusticeForBreonnaTaylor #JusticeForAhmaudArbery

Sincerely,
James

James Davis
University of Florida College of Medicine
President & Academic Chair | Class of 2022

Hello my friends,

It is with a heavy heart and burdened mind that I send you this email. With two renal exams upcoming this Friday, I tried my best to stay focused on studying, but the **state of emergency** that we are currently in warrants this address now.

We have been in a state of emergency since the inception of our constitution. I know that many of my fellow black students, residents, and faculty at UF COM and around the world are hurting. We are frustrated and tired of being devalued.

Freedom, liberty, and justice have never truly been for all. As much as our society attempts to turn a blind eye to this, we are reminded of this simple fact every day. Communities of color face an uphill battle in obtaining an education, in accessing healthcare, in finding suitable employment, in securing housing, and in navigating the criminal *justice* system. *As a black man in America today, statistically, I should not be here among you as a medical student.* That is *my* reality; that is *our* reality!

As my emotions and thoughts tossed and turned this week, I reflected on my journey here. I think about the moments my heart skips a beat when a police car pulls up behind me, or when I enter a meeting and I am the only person of color in the room or the fact that I am amongst the few, if not the first black student to assume the position of Academic Chair.

The sole difference between George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, and myself is that I am alive today to address you. My voice can still be heard. And with that voice, I vow to dedicate myself and my career to the advancement of our society. Regardless of where we are in our lives, we have the ability to enact change and bring meaningful reform. Reform that works for all of us. Reform that stands with and supports the most vulnerable among us. Reform that is guided by our shared sense of humanity. It starts with how we treat our colleagues, patients, classmates, and any other human-being we come across in this life.

Scripture tells us that "Faith is the confidence in what we **hope** for and assurance about what we do not see." We have yet to see *real* freedom, liberty, and justice for *all* in America. But I am hopeful that with love, tolerance, understanding, and sacrifice that we will see it. I have faith in us!

As we prepare for our exams, I pray that peace and safety finds you all. We have had such an incredible first year up until recent events. Study hard to finish strong! Good luck my friends.

We have much work to do!

With overwhelming love,
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