

**Anything less than  
deep, pervasive,  
cultural  
transformation  
would be  
surrendering the  
values we hold  
most dear.**

**#BlackLivesMatter**

We recognize the killings of unarmed Black people and the disproportionate physical, emotional, and economic suffering of communities of color, which have been exacerbated and exposed in the pandemic, as continuations of our nation's ongoing and unchecked history of racism and white supremacy; and as antithetical to the values we hold dear, including "self-evident truths" that we are all created equal and all endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We join in solidarity with agents of change who seek to shape our collective consciousness and our democracy to align with our espoused values and ideals, demanding that we address structural racism across all our institutions and systems. We heed the call for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole to learn and adopt anti-racist ways of perceiving and being, and to redefine relationships and activities based on anti-racist commitments – and we commit to doing this work in our spheres of influence and supporting others in theirs.

The Center for Community-Based Learning at Wofford College and the programs it houses have always valued social justice. It is one of the learning outcomes for students in our programs, one of the ways we operationalize the mission of Wofford College to “prepare students for extraordinary and positive contributions to a global society,” and a driver in the design and implementation of our community partnerships and community engagement programs. We are now working to make that value more explicit and to move it more clearly and visibly to the center of everything we do with students, faculty, community partners, and society at-large. In the wise and impassioned words of Killer Mike, “Now is the time to plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize.”

We recommit ourselves as participating members of and accountable allies with marginalized and oppressed communities. We recommit ourselves as partners with organizations and coalitions advocating and working for a more just, humane, and equitable Spartanburg, America, and world. We recommit ourselves to educating and equipping citizens – especially, but not exclusively, Wofford students - with the sensibilities, understandings, knowledge, skills, and experience needed to excavate, reckon with, dismantle, and ultimately heal from the culture of white supremacy that has been an animating psychic and structural force in our nation from its beginning, and that Resmaa Menaken writes, “is in our nervous systems.” To replace the culture of white supremacy with one of truth-telling, empathy, love, justice, peace, equity, democracy, and recognition and celebration of our shared humanity.

This will not be easy or simple. But it is possible and very, very necessary. And we will band together – across campus, across Spartanburg, across the Southeast, across the nation and the world - to do it.

We see some using their voices, platforms, and privilege to divide us; to vilify demonstrators, Black and Brown people and communities, the free press; to spread misinformation; to sow distrust and discord; and to incite violence. We reject these anti-democratic messages. We urge these people to stop, listen, and reflect; to accept the invitation this moment of reckoning offers to overcome conscious and unconscious fears of loss of power and status, in order to be better humans and better Americans; to see beyond perceived differences to our common, shared humanity, and to our common, shared interests, which include both justice and peace; and then to use their voices and platforms accordingly.

This is not a zero-sum game. It's not a game at all. There is no "us vs. them." We are all "us." It is time for all of us to stand up, show up, and do the work to ensure that our psyches, systems, and society reflect that. As City of Spartanburg Chief of Police Alonzo Thompson said, after leading a crowd assembled in Morgan Square on June 5, 2020, in 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silent reflection, "George Floyd's daughter said, 'My Daddy changed the world.' Let us leave here and make it so."

Offered with love,

Jessalyn Story, James Stukes, Toria Teamer, and Tracey Southers  
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