Dear IU School of Social Work Community,

On behalf of myself and the IU School of Social Work, our condolences go out to the families of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and the countless other Black victims of violence who go unnamed each and every day.

We have borne witness to countless deaths over the past three months, whether from COVID-19 or uncontested violence against people of color and impoverished communities. The disparities in the respective outcomes are palpable.

This time the voices would not be silenced. In whatever ways one may judge or interpret the protests and rioting, society cannot ignore the unassailable cries for justice. While my aching heart compels me to communicate my anguish to our students, staff and faculty, my passion for justice calls me to act.

Over the weekend I heard from an African American student outside of our school questioning social work’s invisibility in acting against racist structures threatening the everyday existence of “Black African Americans.” I thank her for that email. Members of our own school community similarly implore us to project a more prominent voice in denouncing the racism and other isms woven into the systems governing our safety, health, economic and overall wellbeing on all levels. I thank them for reaching out to me.

As your Dean, I committed to stepping into the complex diversity challenges before us. I stand by that commitment and invite us to work together to bring healing to our own community while finding our collective voice to effect change in our broader communities.

We are the Indiana University School of Social Work. We ascribe to professional values that lead us to interrupt injustice and be a part of the solution. As I told our graduating students this year, our work takes courage. Now is the time to demonstrate that courage! Let’s lift up one another, wherever we are along the journey, and together stand against racism to realize more equitable systems and the just society we believe is possible.

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