

The United States will never again claim that place of moral leadership in the world until we face our original sin of slavery and its chronic disease of racism. At certain times, radical change for the good is possible. — There was the period between 1860 and 1870, which included the Civil War and a cost of 600k to 700k dead, and then so much later, decades, almost a hundred years later, the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 60's, and now again, if we can seize this moment.

Today, during a time of national, even global grief related to COVID-19, amidst massive economic hardships, particularly for people of color and those who do not have stock market assets, we find ourselves in shock. We are stunned, perhaps stunned awake by what we have all witnessed on our screens many times over, the murder of another black man, this time Mr. George Floyd, by people delegated to be our peacekeepers. This nation is not a “we” until we deal with our founding sin that haunts us all, but murders men of color.

Mercy's mission in higher education is shaped by Catholic Social Teaching and further deepened by the charism of Mercy, which includes special attention to the evil of racism and our complicity in it. As Mercy we have a calling and a moral obligation to use the tools and resources of our profession in conjunction with the principles that Jesus preached and lived by in his life to help us grow out of racism and into a nation worthy of the dignity of all of its people. In Mercy we speak of transformation and now we must embrace the path of transformation at a whole new level. Those of privilege, we must ask ourselves, why so belatedly. -- This is the deep path of learning and goodness. It calls for humility, listening, and a willingness to change by those of us with advantage. It calls for a willingness to use education and our disciplines to help heal the sickness of this lingering national illness so that liberty and the common good can work for all. This work requires an integration of mind and heart.

While there is great discord in our nation, there is tremendous hope that will not be frightened or bullied away. Just look at the diversity of young and old who are marching and working peacefully and assertively for change. Just listen to the variety of young voices who are stepping into leadership roles in profound ways and wanting to do so wisely and non-violently. Consider the many images we have seen that speak of courageous hope.

All of our Mercy colleges and universities have long been committed to the dignity of every person, but it's not enough. We must go to a whole new level. These times ring with a great urgency and of opportunity. With new spirit and resolve, many have begun already to examine policies, practices, and curriculum, as well as calling for ways to collaborate with other institutions and partners regarding research, dialogue, and efforts to face this insidious evil that hangs over us for 400 years, like a national pall. CMHE looks forward to entering the dialogue and these efforts with you.

See next page for questions—



As a Mercy College or University and in considering the Mercy Integrated Core Areas:

1. What are key questions and what do we need to address immediately? How?
2. What questions are emerging and what do we need to address over the next year? How?
3. How are the questions being formed anew and what do we need to address over the next 2-3 years? How?
4. How is racism connected to each of the other Mercy Critical Concerns? (Non-violence, Earth, Women and all who are marginalized, Immigration/Migration)?
5. How is economics and how we attribute value and hold and share wealth connected to racism?
6. How can we learn together as a Mercy system of colleges and universities?

As a nation:

1. What are key questions and what do we need to address immediately? How?
2. What questions are emerging and what do we need to address over the next year? How?
3. How are the questions being formed anew and what do we need to address over the next 2-5 years? How?
4. How is racism connected to each of the other Mercy Critical Concerns? (Non-violence, Earth, Women and all who are marginalized, Immigration/Migration)?
5. How is economics and how we attribute value and hold and share wealth connected to racism?