



ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
MID-SOUTH

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June 1, 2020

Dear ASU Mid-South Family,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones well and finding ways to cope with the unprecedented events of the past several weeks. I, like undoubtedly many of you, have spent the past several days trying to reconcile what I wish were true about our country and the actual truth laid bare yet again by the recent death of George Floyd.

As the leader of this institution, my job is often to motivate, inspire, and comfort, but I have no words of solace that will heal the wounds many of you feel right now. Those wounds are too deep, and they've been there too long. I cannot make sense of the deaths of Mr. Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Amaud Arbery, or any of the countless others whose violent deaths have served to highlight the racial injustices that exist in our country. Therefore, it's impossible for me to put any of them in any type of meaningful perspective for you.

As a white person, I will never know what it means to be black in this country. Thus, I cannot truly know all the emotions that my black friends, students, and colleagues feel. But to them I say this: on this campus, you will not only be listened to, you will be heard. I will not allow people to change the subject as we attempt to dialogue on these issues, because I know the only way to change society is by confronting the ugly truths that created and continue to sustain the problem. Further, I will call out racist behavior when I see it, wherever I see it, because I recognize that silence is complicity. And I will do my best to educate people who look like me about what it truly means to be an ally to people who look like you.

At ASU Mid-South, diversity is one of our stated core values:

*We believe diversity embraces acceptance, inclusion, and respect. We value understanding each other and ourselves, and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the richness each individual contributes to our organizational culture.*

This is our way of saying to the world that our students, our faculty, and our staff will respect and value each person's dignity, humanity, and human rights. We at ASU Mid-South will not tolerate less, especially from those who wish to be members of our family.

Please know that my heart is with each of you during these extraordinarily difficult times. I pray each one of you continues to be healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Debra West, Ph.D.  
Chancellor