



MEMO

TO: Hawk Family and Friends

FROM: President Anderson

Date: May 31, 2020

The Hazards of Ignoring Race There are certain types of events that are so devastating that our only response is feeling overwhelmed, as we question whether our world is simply stated, hopelessly out of control. While such feelings have their place in helping us cope, in the face of evident injustice and inhumanity, we have a moral imperative to speak, to raise our voices, and to seek justice. We do so as teachers, parents, students, friends, clergy, neighbors and yes, university presidents. The death of George Floyd, suffocated under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer, is just the latest in a string of deaths of African Americans in this country. In recent weeks, we have also seen it took three months and the release of a videotape of the death of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia before arrests were made and just days ago in Louisville, KY, the death of Breonna Taylor, a victim of mistaken identity, was protested in the streets, leading to more violence within the already-traumatized community. These national acts of violence affect us all, and in specific ways. We mourn, we speak out for justice, we call for reform. For me, as a University President, these incidents are especially disturbing because for two years, I have been the caretaker of three thousand students' lives. Young dynamic citizens who are seeking knowledge, careers, and a fulfilling life. It is hard for me to reconcile at a moment like this how our mission of hope intersects with the trauma of race-related violence. And yet, despite, and in spite of, the structural racism too many underrepresented and under-voiced members of our nation experience, our students persist in their studies to become educators, doctors, engineers, pilots, artists, scientists, health professionals, and community leaders, looking forward to engaging and building a bright new world. The anger, fear, and sadness we see in communities that have experienced racial violence give voice to a deep-seated cry to be heard and respected. As President of UMES, I am passionately engaged in my care-taking responsibilities and apply them seriously every day. Our campus remains committed to building strong character, expanding bright minds, and nurturing our students' creative souls in pursuit of game-changing inventions, development of new processes to improve lives, and contributions to the

arts. We cannot remain quiet in these troubled times. Truly educated and informed citizens do not wish to continue to suffer in silence. As a higher education community focused on change and transformation, we lift our voices in the call for true justice to prevail across the nation, so we can move forward together into an inclusive and equitable future. We cannot go on ignoring the role of race in this goal. We cannot continue to think of the incidences of racially motivated crimes as isolated incidents. We cannot persist in asking what can we learn from these incidents. We need to address these aggressions and transgressions with reasoned responses. Responses that uniformly affirm the value and need for our citizens to peacefully voice their very real concerns through voting, teaching, research, and community engagement. We must work together unceasingly to change the public discourse from racism, intolerance, and all forms of bigotry to one focused on celebrations of our humanity, and shared values for justice and opportunity for all. We wonder what we can do as a society to change this trajectory. One answer is Education. This is why HBCUs exist and why they are still vital and valuable in 2020 – maybe now more than ever. Access and opportunity are built into our mission. We provide an education to anyone, regardless of the color of your skin. All we ask is that you show up and put in the work. I believe education is the antidote to hate, fear, and ignorance. It's why I and other life-long educators show up every day. Make education a goal and we will help you get there. UMES welcomes everyone who seeks to educate themselves and we challenge our students to go out into the world and make it a better place. Being Black or brown or white or more than one race; a member of the LGBTQIA community; a person of faith or not; no matter what makes up your identity, University of Maryland Eastern Shore welcomes you with open arms. Being Black is not a crime in America. Not taking the opportunity to educate oneself is.

Hawk Pride!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi M. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "H" and "A".

Dr. Heidi M. Anderson

