

Be Proud of What You See in the Mirror

The following remarks were presented on my behalf at the Balancing the Scales for Justice march/rally on June 20, 2020.

The last few weeks have been educational, thought provoking, and at times, uncomfortable. I believe I am an open-minded and caring person, but my emotional response to the recent events has forced me to take a long look in the mirror. Am I making the impact that I want in our community, in our city and in our country? Am I helping develop a safer and more just world for my children? Am I the role model I aspire to be for my family?

The honest answer to these questions is that I can do more, that I must do more and that we all must do more. It is my responsibility to leverage the opportunities I have benefited from throughout my life into making a positive impact on others and our community. Failing to recognize this responsibility is simply selfish and ignorant.



I am guilty of believing our country was maturing past the abhorrent racial inequities within our justice system and common life that have plagued previous generations. Recent events, however, have reminded me that we are not there yet—not even close. Unfortunately, we still live in a world where people are profiled, punished, beaten, arrested and prosecuted, and in some instances, killed, simply on the basis of race. This is absolutely unacceptable, and we must do better. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the leaders in our community, such as the Louisville Bar Association, to advocate and make the changes necessary within the system to stop this behavior. We cannot let this moment slip away.

In order to make a long-lasting and discernable difference in our community, our city and our country, the LBA is committed to taking a leading role in promoting racial justice both within the legal system and the Louisville community at large. The LBA is reviewing what steps will prove most effective, but we are dedicated to living out our mission of promoting justice, professional excellence, and respect for the law—more than ever before—by hosting community conversations focused on racial equality while also working with community leaders and elected officials to implement laws and regulations that promote a world we are all proud to live in.

We will make mistakes and some of our efforts will fail, but success is never a straight line. True leaders, however, are unafraid of failing. Rather, they seize a moment where people want to be led and help those same people achieve the successes they dream about.

The LBA recently issued a statement in support of the Black Lives Matter protests (see below) and we are committed to turning our words into action. Providing support today is our first step. The LBA is full of some of our community's greatest leaders, and over the next few weeks, months and years, the LBA's membership, and the organization itself, will help move this community and Commonwealth forward so that our children can one day look in the mirror and be proud of what they see and the community they live in. Until that day comes, however, we are committed to making sure we don't stop until our country's atrocious racial inequities are truly a thing of our past. Change is never easy, but nothing right and just ever is.

Sincerely,

Peter H. Wayne IV
LBA President



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Statement from the Louisville Bar Association on the Black Lives Matter Protests

June 4, 2020

The Louisville Bar Association's mission is to promote justice, professional excellence and respect for the law; improve public access to the judicial system; provide law-related services to the community; and serve our members.

Recent events within our city and across our nation are highlighting current and historic grievances regarding abhorrent racial inequities within our justice system and common life. During this critical moment in the history of our community and our country, the Louisville Bar Association and its members have both an ethical and a moral responsibility to change long-standing systemic issues of racial injustice. Existing and historical policies and practices within our community have resulted in racial disparity, inequity and injustice, and recent events have created a flashpoint to ignite protests focused on these injustices.

Our country relies upon the rule of law, and the application of that rule must be fair to everyone. Therefore, it is imperative that the legal community play a restorative role to help dismantle institutional barriers, both within the legal system and beyond, to address the biases that prevent people of color from enjoying equal protections under the laws of our Commonwealth and this country, and to build a better justice system and life for all of our citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, or skin color.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?" The LBA will continue its work and extend our resources and expertise to help support and lead governmental and private endeavors focused on ensuring true and equal justice for all citizens, regardless of race or color, in our community. It is our moral and ethical responsibility not just as legal professionals, but also as human beings and citizens of our community to do so. We must demand better from our country, our government, our fellow citizens, and ourselves.

We hear you, we see you, and we stand with you – Black Lives Matter.