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Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

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## **Cardozo's Response to Racial Violence: History, Criminal Justice Reform and Call to Action**

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# Cardozo's Response to Racial Violence: History, Criminal Justice Reform and Call to Action

**To the Cardozo community,**

For some, the outrage across our country this week was an awakening; for many others, it was yet another reminder of how much work there is still left to do to eradicate the racism that threatens Black lives and the promise of equality under the law.

As a community, we are recommitting ourselves to the long-term work of anti-racist action. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Student Services and Advising, the Office of Alumni Affairs, the Center for Public Service, the Center for Rights and Justice, and members of the faculty are collaborating to present a series of events in the coming weeks to help our community understand what is happening, reflect on how we got here, and learn about how we as lawyers can advocate against anti-Black racism and drive institutional change.

Please consider joining one or more of these events:

- The Office of Student Services and Advising will host a two-part series over Zoom featuring **Professor Michelle Adams**.
- **Monday, June 8:** Designed specifically for African American and Black-identified students, faculty, and staff, this session will provide historical context for our current climate and hold space for Black voices. We recognize the real impact that racial trauma has on the Black community. The session begins at 5:30 p.m.
- **Monday, June 15:** A second session will be held, welcoming all members of the Cardozo community. We will use this time to explore effective allyship and where we can go from here as an institution. The session begins at 5:30 p.m.
- **Wednesday, June 10:** The annual Inspire! Awards will celebrate students and community leaders who made strides this past year in public service in a virtual ceremony. The three Community Impact Honorees, Angela Black, Sharonne Salaam, and Staci Dupont, are all family members of men who suffered injustices in our criminal justice system. Kevin Richardson, one of

The Exonerated Five portrayed in *When They See Us*, will also join the ceremony to present the award. The virtual event will begin at 5 p.m.

- **Thursday, June 11: Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Nicole Seawright** will be joined by **Caprice Jenerson, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer of NYLAG**, for a *Conversation on Community Resources: Lawyers and Antiracism*, a lunchtime event on how students can get involved with local and national organizations fighting for justice.
- **Thursday, June 11: Professor Alex Reinert, Director of the Center for Rights and Justice**, will facilitate *Alumni Roundtable on the Murder of George Floyd and Rethinking the Criminal Legal System*, a conversation among Cardozo alumni who have engaged in individual representation and structural reform challenging all aspects of the criminal legal system. There will also be time for students to ask questions. The event will begin at **4 p.m.** on Zoom.

Please watch your inbox in the coming days for details and Zoom links. We will continue to share new events and resources as they are put together. This crucial work will extend far beyond this week, this month, and this year. The outpouring of voices this week from Cardozo students and alumni has proven that our community is ready to seize this moment and turn it into long-term action. I continue to be inspired by your commitment to justice and to standing up for what is right; despite the difficulties of the road ahead, knowing the kind of lawyers you are going to become gives me hope for a brighter future.

**Dean Melanie Leslie**

**Dean and Dr. Samuel Belkin Professor of Law**