

May 31, 2020

Dear Trojan Community,

I write today, hoping you and your families are well and safe, yet knowing that many of you are not; your hearts are aching, and you are searching for answers, actions, and hope. The horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others, together with the demonstrations and unrest sweeping our nation are tearing at us all.

These violent acts come at a time when our world has already been profoundly disrupted by COVID-19. And many of those hit the hardest are people of color, particularly African Americans – the very same people in communities already burdened by a history of prejudice, poverty, and especially racism.

Many of you have told me that you are feeling sad, angry, desperate and despairing as you face such grave injustices and the escalation of tensions, and you are trying to find a way forward.

It weighs heavily on all of us. But we are Trojans, united as a university dedicated to the fundamental principles of equality and inclusion, education, and discovery for the good of humanity. We can make a positive difference, as we have for more than 100 years.

I don't have the answers today, but we will continue to seek them together. I know that we can effect change – in our community, our city, and our nation. Now, more than ever, we need to rely on each other and help each other and our neighbors through these times. We are a community strengthened by the diversity that you bring – we are the students who want to change the world, the faculty dedicated to inspiring young leaders, the staff who keep the university running, the healthcare workers on the front lines, the social workers, the business leaders, the community organizers, the creators, entrepreneurs, teachers, and scholars our nation needs, and so much more. We must be there to support our communities. And, we know we can.

This moment is our call to action. It will be challenging to confront directly issues like racism in our community, but we must. We have started discussions with our student, faculty, staff, and alumni organizations, our civic leaders and our neighbors in the community. We recognize the need for continued conversations around policing, and our chief of the USC Department of Public Safety will be partnering with our campus and broader community to find collective answers to persistent inequities. We will engage you to break down silos that separate us, encourage thoughtful debate, and protect the dignity of every individual in our community. Together, we will stand for justice and embrace a culture of respect for all.

With respect and admiration,



Carol L. Folt
President