

## **Virtual PSOM Community Dialogue on Racism, Racial Justice and Social Equity**

On June 8, Dean Jameson hosted an unprecedented event at this momentous time in the history of the nation and the institution. Technology facilitated the opportunity for 850 members of the Penn community to come together for a crucial discussion about race, structural racism, and social justice. Our panelists were Dr. Risa Lavisso-Mourey, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation PIK Professor of Health Policy and Health Equity at the University of Pennsylvania; Lamin Sonko, Rising MS4 on track to get an MD/MBA; Dr. Meghan Lane-Fall, Associate Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care and Epidemiology at the Perelman School of Medicine and Chair of the Medical Faculty Senate; Richard Watson, Member of Patient Transportation Services at HUP for 10 years; Dr. Shawn Bates, Postdoctoral Fellow at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Dr. George Dalembert, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Children's Hospital; and Dr. Maria Oquendo, Chair of Psychiatry; also present were Eve Higginbotham, Vice Dean for Inclusion and Diversity; Kevin Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Madeline Bell, President and CEO, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The panelists represented a cross section of key stakeholders. Prior to the discussion, panelists were asked to consider two questions: what does this moment mean to you and what do you hope for the future? The discussion was a combination of painful, illuminating, and productive

### **Summary**

The discussion opened with their thoughts on these questions, which ranged from racial inequities in health outcomes and specifically COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment to interactions with law enforcement and Penn police by staff, students, and faculty of color.

One important issue raised was the necessity for allies to learn to sit with their discomfort around confronting their own biases and addressing biased behavior when they see it. Racial micro-aggressions are common in our society, and Penn needs tools to specifically address them and to protect community members who bring attention to those micro-aggressions. The University of Pennsylvania is a leader in so many areas, and we have an opportunity now to lead in creating anti-racist policies and curriculum. There is a movement happening across the country right now and we need to keep our momentum and keep the conversation going. There will be further discussion sessions in the future.

Some questions which were not addressed due to time will be introduced at those later sessions, such as how Penn can empower and support groups doing work on inclusion, diversity, and equity; how we can hold departments accountable, how we can include anti-racist training in curriculum and professional development; how Penn will better serve its surrounding community, whether it will stop policing the neighborhood and start paying taxes, and divest from Philly PD, and how we can increase access to mental health resources for faculty, staff, and students of color. We plan to address these questions in the next few weeks as we embark on a whole scale strategic planning process to develop the blueprint for sustainable institutional change.

To listen to the full town hall please visit:

<https://mediasite.med.upenn.edu/mediasite/Play/6a395bbcc152400b9249514d4eb5581b1d>