

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

July 31, 2020



The Department of Radiation Oncology stands to acknowledge and join in solidarity with those who are subject to or responsibly act against the realities of race-driven violence, inequality and oppression. The current crisis that grips our nation portrays the realities that are faced by Black men, women and children in our communities. Bearing tragic witness to these realities, the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, among centuries of others, are a testament to the inexcusable need for our society to acknowledge and address its failure to provide for equality among its citizens, even in the most basic of rights. With deep sadness, we reflect on these events that demand our attention and identify our responsibility to enact change in the attitudes and actions that define us as a society of different races, ethnicities, religions, gender identities or expressions, languages, nationalities, ages, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic status, and physical abilities. From these differences among us emanates an invaluable diversity of experiences and backgrounds that are recognizable strengths. It is imperative we act as a community to develop these strengths, not willfully oppress diversity. Moreover, in synchrony with this action, we must protect against a return to the complacency that repeatedly rears itself throughout our history, standing in the path of progress.

This is a crisis driven by injustices that are pervasive throughout many facets of our social fabric. It is not a consequence attributable to one exclusive aspect of our political, legal, educational, or economic systems. This is not a struggle to be borne by only the Black community, or any other community of marginalized individuals who are unfairly, unlawfully, and unethically singled out by societal prejudices. It is a conflict that transcends any single system or community, making it the duty of all of us as individuals to directly address racial inequalities and mechanisms of marginalization that present themselves in the communities of our families, social groups, workplaces, towns, states and nation. As a department of medical professionals, scientists, and administrators we see it as our role to lead by example: implementing mandatory training and mentoring to all employees to educate on diversity and address bias; providing resources for additional training, sponsorship and research; demanding respect of all individuals and accountability to any in opposition; listening and space-making to create open dialogue and to celebrate our differences; and empowering and uplifting the voices of all underrepresented individuals by promoting outreach for inclusion through scholarship and research, aligning efforts with our colleagues to support activism within our broader community. We are committed to taking on the difficult conversations on racism and other forms of discrimination as active listeners, knowing full well that it is through this discomfort that change will be mediated.

As events continue to unfold in this ongoing struggle for equality among those of all races and identities in our nation, we come forward as both individuals and a department to mourn the lives lost and commit to action against societal prejudices that promote structural racism through intolerance. As a driving principle of a just society, we invariably recognize the value of the humanity that exists within every person. This humanity forms our common bond, irrespective of color, gender, creed or any other identifying factor. We pledge to challenge others within our communities to act in accordance with the dignity and worth of all people. We stand together with colleagues in our department, our institute, and beyond to affirm the humanity shared by people of all races and to advocate for equity and justice that is rooted in nothing less than its fundamental truth.