

Gregory E. Sterling:

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 justifiably generated a national reaction. It was on one hand, just another on a disturbingly long list of police killings of black people. It was on the other hand, a particularly callous act by an individual who had taken an oath to defend and protect. An act that dramatically revealed the barbarous racism that has afflicted our society for too long. Many of us stood vicariously on the sidewalk with the people who were present and shouted, "Get off him. Get off him."

What this event and the aftermath forced many of us to consider in ways that we had not previously, was the systemic nature of racism. Racism is not only individual behavior and outlook, it is a social system that has been built into the fabric of our society. A social system that influences too many individuals. We must recognize that the white supremacists who expressed themselves so abhorrently and violently in Charlottesville are an extreme instantiation of a value that has shaped our society.

I wish that I could say otherwise. We know that there were individuals who owned slaves who were associated with Yale. In a recent collection of papers that came to our library from the family of Timothy Dwight, President of Yale and grandson of Jonathan Edwards, there is a receipt of Jonathan Edwards' purchase of three-year-old boy named Titus. We know that George Berkeley made arrangements with the proceeds of his farm in Rhode Island that was worked by six slaves to come to Yale as Berkeley premiums or scholarships for students.

These 18th century acts are among the most egregious examples of ties to slavery by a major religious figure associated with Yale but there is more that we must acknowledge. There's a systemic marginalization of African-Americans during our history as an institution. The marginalization felt by those who have been here, to say nothing about those who chose never to come. This haunts me most. We cannot rewrite history, nor can we ignore the legacy of the historical wrongs.

We ask for forgiveness. We ask God for forgiveness. We ask those against whom we have sinned for forgiveness. We do not ask for forgiveness without working to change our institution. Immediately after the murder of George Floyd, the leadership team of the school met and formulated a number of proposals to address the recognition that we have not done enough to make everyone feel equally included in our community.

I then called a special meeting of the Dean's Advisory Council to lay these out and seek financial support. In the fall of that year, I appointed an Anti-racism Task Force led by Professors Willie Jennings and Laura Nasrallah that was charged with developing a new strategic plan to promote a sense of belonging for all. The Task Force accepted some of the proposals of the leadership team and added many others totalling 27 recommendations.

We're attempting to address all 27 but today, I want to mention four that are aimed at addressing the effects of racism in our society and its historical presence at YDS. They are not the entirety of our response but they illustrate the seriousness with which we have taken the recommendations. We should not be naïve. We will not overcome the systemic and personal racism that white supremacy has

spawned in our society with a new strategic plan, no matter how comprehensive the plan is or how fully we implement it but we must start somewhere.

Here are some of the ways we will begin. The Task Force recommended that we offer 10 social justice scholarships each year to incoming students who are dedicated to social justice work. These will be distributed evenly between MDIV and MAR students. The scholarships will provide full tuition, the general fee, the board fee, in a \$10,000 dollar a year stipend. The Divinity School is setting aside \$20 million dollars in endowment to fund these scholarships.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that, Jean Wood, class of '64 and her son, Chris Wood, a Yale College alum have pledged an additional 250,000 to help us launch these scholarships. Another recommendation was the establishment of social justice research funds for students. More specifically, to establish a fund that would provide 10 students a summer with \$2,000 dollars each to engage in research for social justice.

I'm delighted to announce that a couple from our Dean's Advisory Council have pledged \$500,000 dollars in endowment for this fund. We are still in the process of working out the details but I'm committing the school to cover the annual expenditure until the endowment is in place. The funds will be administered through the Office of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Associate Dean Joyce Mercer will provide details early in the spring.

A third recommendation was permanent funding for students to attend the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. We've been funding this on an ad hoc basis but pledge now, to do so regularly until we can raise an endowment for it. Associate Deans Joyce Mercer and Lynn Sullivan have developed an application process for it so that we can regularize and routinize this process. Some of you have actually already applied. Finally, the Task Force recommended that we recognize the work of a student who had made notable contributions to social justice during their career at YDS in the form of a prize at commencement.

Anticipating this recommendation, we began doing so at commencement last year when we established the Reverend Frederick J. Jerry Streets Prize. The inaugural recipient was JaQuan Beachem. I am pleased to announce that we have been able to secure permanent funding for this initiative within the YDS budget. These are some of the ways that we are attempting to alter the culture and ethos of our community. Last spring, we elevated Lynn Sullivan to an Associate Dean's position, and formed a new committee, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee to assist her in monitoring our progress.

At the same time, President Salovey formed a university-wide effort led by Kim Goff-Crews and Gary Desir to request every unit at Yale to formulate a five-year DEIB Plan. We have formulated our plan based on the recommendations of the Anti-racism Task Force. I would now like to ask Associate Dean Sullivan to speak about the YDS plan.

Lynn Sullivan-Harmon:

As you know by now, in February, the university asked each unit to develop a five-year Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Plan. We were well-positioned as Dean Sterling already created a Task Force with a charge to center the work of anti-racism. Our first step was to launch a self-assessment process in which one third of our community including students, faculty, staff and alumni participated in a comprehensive survey illuminating our strengths and weaknesses and invited participants to submit areas and topics that were not in the questions we posed.

Our first draft was due to the university in May and it included our interpretation of the community's survey, information gleaned from informal and formal discussions, the staff workplace report, a newly created timeline of previous DEI strategic initiatives, one-on-one and large group conversations with alums, minutes from faculty committees and again, greatly leveraging the work of our Anti-racism Task Force.

From this, we also synthesized a significant volume of qualitative data that we received with the support of a consulting firm that the university sponsored. The third-party at self-assessment findings served to be helpful in that it affirmed what we already gathered as in internal Task Force, as to the themes and trending topics we needed to prioritize in the plan.

What we heard from the YDS community, "Alongside the findings of the Task Force, craft an equity plan and strategy that is adopted by the various boards who oversee the leadership and governance of YDS. Keep the integrity of the Anti-racism Task Force in the midst of important DEIB efforts. Create an implementation committee. A call for consistent staff and faculty education and training, multiple campus events and lectures around issues of racism and social justice. TFs are not adequately prepared to discuss issues like racism and homophobia during section groups."

While diversity may be broadly defined including gender and gender expression, ability, sexual orientation, generational diversity, religion, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, international identities and more, we prioritize the work of anti-racism particularly in our year one plans. However, with an eye to actively respond to a wide range of some of this feedback and the intersectionality of our constituents. For example, the implementation of our plan rests with the DEIB Committee, which includes faculty, staff and student representatives.

It is our job to pick up where the Anti-racism Task Force submitted its recommendations. We have already begun the work of normalizing consistent professional development opportunities utilizing the existing infrastructure of our annual retreats, monthly staff and faculty meetings and BTFO, before the fall orientations.

Topics that we have held space to discuss include the impact of radical hospitality on culture, the ways in which the politics of one's body particularly in PWIs, predominantly white institutions show up, communication and language vehicles that work are affirming and signal inclusivity, defining Title VI policies and procedures, exploring how our habits of mind may lead to dangerous, implicit or some

would say, complicit biases, resisting the tendency for our intellectual hubris to interfere with our ability to express empathy and participating in faculty reads and chapter discussions like Reverend Dr. Jennings's book *After Whiteness*.

Understand the leadership of Professor Dinkler, we are currently piloting Anti-racism Workshops for TFs. There are many more examples of how our self-assessment has translated into recommendations and, therefore, deliberate action steps already underway. The final version of our five-year plan was submitted in early fall and it followed university prescriptive categories in the following areas, scholarship, research practice and teaching, diversity of the Yale community, equitable process, procedure and responses, professional and personal development of inclusive practice, acknowledgement, recognition and respect and communication, transparency and accountability.

While this infographic only provides a snapshot of approved action steps, we hope it illustrates the scope of our ambitious goals that we hold ourselves accountable for through a thoughtful implementation process. I'd also like to say a quick word about our attention to how our plan must underscore the way in which we experience a community of belonging. "Belonging to what?" one may question.

In order to cultivate a sense of belonging, we continue to enhance the iconography of the space, identify and attend to voices missing from the curriculum and texts, make physical adjustments to the space and material for accessibility and, moreover, learn the conditions necessary for all members of the YDS community and our New Haven neighbors to meet this very space with the welcome and warmth that should be expected from all of us.

What might we need to learn about ourselves and the greater community in which we are a part, in order to engage in reciprocal exchanges outside of YDS walls in respectful and meaningful ways? Increasing a positive culture capital includes owning areas of opportunities for growth and exercising humility to listen to understand, not just to respond.

Alongside strategic and monetary goals, we need to protect the wellbeing and psychological safety of all members of the community, especially those who identify as part of historically excluded groups. Finally, the DEIB Plan is not a means to an end. Beyond implementation, we will be updating the plan each academic year as we both shepherd and become stewards of what I like to think of as God's work, ethical, moral, spiritual and boundless.