

To the YSPH Community,

We are heartened by the verdict in the Derek Chauvin murder trial as it is one step closer to addressing anti-black racism and longstanding discrimination, holding individuals accountable who violate their basic human rights. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison stated, “justice implies true restoration, but this is accountability which is the first step towards justice.” Police, vigilante, and racist murders shine a very powerful light on the fact that Black Americans are simply not treated fairly in this country and there is a very real fear of interaction with law enforcement. This trial was one step towards justice, albeit a small one given the magnitude of the remaining work that needs to be done.

YSPH is committed to deepening the School’s focus on social justice and anti-black racism and discrimination. Most recently, the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences has recruited new faculty members in who are experts in the intersectionality of racism and health. Ijeoma Opara, Ph.D., currently an assistant professor of social work at Stony Brook University, examines how socio-cultural factors like systemic racism influence substance use and sexual health among Black and Latinx youth. At Yale, she will use community-participatory approaches to develop interventions that foster racial pride and empowerment particularly for Black girls. The other new faculty member, Chelsey Carter, is a joint M.P.H.-Ph.D. candidate at Washington University in St. Louis and soon commences a post-doctoral fellow at Princeton University. Her research experience focuses on the intersection of race, class, gender, and chronic disease. Her doctoral dissertation, rooted in decolonizing and Black feminist methodologies, used 24 months of ethnographic research in post-Ferguson St. Louis to examine how epistemological biases around amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) are generated and sustained in scientific research, in public awareness campaigns, and among persons living with ALS.

Additionally, we are developing a 5-year strategic plan to address issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as a part of an overall University-wide design along with other departments and schools across campus and have plans to share that with the school community in the coming weeks.

We hope that this verdict has given the family of George Floyd a modicum of peace as they move forward putting the pieces back together after such an avoidable tragedy. We are committed to carrying the torch for social justice and remaining steadfast in our efforts to further our scholarship, research, community engagement and involvement and further address systemic racism and other unfair practices rooted in discrimination towards communities of color. We encourage you to use any of the following resources to support your emotional and mental health and well-being during this time:

- [Yale Mental Health & Counseling](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program \(Counseling and Support Services\)](#)
- [Yale Chaplain’s Office](#)
- [Diane Frankel-Gramelis](#), YSPH Wellness Counselor

As always, please reach out if there is anything that we can do to support you.

Sten, Mayur and Leigh

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"Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance" ~Verna Myers

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