

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

There is so much to say about the last week of events, and yet, it is difficult to find the words to convey the deep sadness I feel about the state of our country in the wake of more violence against African Americans. The names of the lives lost have come to symbolize an imbalance in this country. Trayvon. Tamir. Sandra. Breonna. Ahmaud. George.

I am reaching out today to reassure you that black lives matter and racism will not be tolerated at the University of Michigan-Flint. Full stop.

I am here to listen and to advocate for all members of our campus community. Systemic racism of more than 400 years is not easily undone, and yet we cannot justify our lack of progress or accept that life in this country is different for people of color.

Civil rights leader and Congressman John Lewis said, "If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it." I believe strongly in this moral obligation to not simply stand by, but to stand up and move to action, which is exactly what the people of Flint are doing.

The world watched as local protesters and police broke a barrier together, a rare move in days marked by endless images of violence. It was our community, our people who came together to say, "Enough."

Monday, Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley spoke eloquently at a rally at City Hall and announced [important measures](#) to ensure fair and safe law enforcement policies for the community that allow for citizen input. As Mayor Neely has stated, "The strength of our community comes from our unity and our willingness to support one another."

At UM-Flint, we pledge to support and build on this positive momentum of unity in our community. Chief Ray Hall of the Department of Public Safety reiterated his unit's collective commitment to the university, stating, "UM-Flint DPS will continue to serve, protect and respect all members of the community. We are inspired by the thoughtful, peaceful protests in Flint and we are dedicated to being part of positive solutions for all people. I want UM-Flint students to know we have their back." Chief Hall is available to anyone who has questions regarding safety at UM-Flint and can be reached at raydhall@umich.edu.

Soon, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee will release a draft of a plan for moving forward to continue to address the important issues of campus climate. You will be invited to provide input and get involved. This is not the end of our efforts, but instead, it is a critical new chapter in our DEI work on this campus and we need everyone to do their part.

There is more that we will do and I will be encouraging campus leaders to find ways to engage with students, faculty and staff as we enhance our culture through the ideals of DEI. David Luke, our interim Campus Diversity Officer, and distinguished faculty member Jan Furman, are leading our current DEI efforts at UM-Flint, and will share updates on these important initiatives.

I know you are hurting. Many of you are scared and worried that all of these protests and loss of life will be for nothing. I am writing today to tell you that at UM-Flint we won't remain silent and simply watch a world on fire.

Our university is in a city that is working together in partnership to share dialogue, ideas and ultimately move conversations to positive, lasting action that will strengthen our bonds with one another. We will do everything we can to achieve greater understanding, acceptance, and healing for all. It is our moral obligation. Join us.

Please reach out to me anytime at ChancellorDutta@umflint.edu. I am here for you.

Deba Dutta
Chancellor