



We at the Ohio Women's Bar Association and Ohio Women's Bar Foundation are deeply disturbed by the most recent examples of racism, bigotry and disregard for basic civil and human rights that have tragically displayed themselves in our country in the past few weeks. These include the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, as well as the viral video from the Central Park birdwatcher, revealing just how deeply racism runs throughout our society. We condemn racism and racial bias in all its forms, and we know we as a society can and must do better.

As lawyers, not only are we uniquely positioned to work for change and ensure the protection of all citizens, but we have a moral and professional obligation to do so. When we became lawyers, each of us swore an oath to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States and the State of Ohio, and we work in the very system of justice that is meant to protect all of our citizens, but too often fails to do so. In fact, history tells us that our legal institutions have frequently contributed to, or codified, racial injustice and injustice against women.

As women lawyers, we at the OWBA and OWBF stand in solidarity with underrepresented groups of all kinds and stand against the violence, racism, discrimination and bias towards Black people that has plagued our country for so many years. The suppression of diverse voices of all kinds, and disregard for the basic concepts of justice and equality, that our friends, neighbors, colleagues, clients and fellow citizens experience every day in this country are antithetical to our mission. We must work to stop it.

We join in the voices of so many other businesses, bar associations, community leaders and individuals across Ohio and the nation that have spoken out about the urgent need to address deeply rooted racism in our society. But we recognize that words, while important, are never enough. We therefore call on all our fellow members of the legal community to recommit themselves to building and safeguarding a society in which the law serves to protect the fundamental rights of all humans—but, above all, lifts up and protects the most vulnerable among us. And we must re-dedicate ourselves, as members of the OWBA and OWBF, to upholding our own mission of diversity and inclusion. The Boards of Trustees for OWBA and OWBF therefore recommit today to actively working to advance those aspects of our mission, vision and values that expressly call upon each of us to advance diversity, foster inclusion, and focus on issues in our profession and our community that cut across all dimensions of diversity. We will increase our programming efforts to provide a safe space for candid and productive dialogue about these difficult and pervasive issues, and will seek out partnerships with our sister affinity organizations around the state to do so. We will continue to identify concrete opportunities for our members, as lawyers and as women, to work to bring about an end to racism and racial disparity.