

## Chair Julie Jones and Managing Partner David Djaha

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### OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE AND TRUE EQUALITY

June 2020

**THE KILLINGS** of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and so many others have amplified long-simmering pain and anger, leaving people around the world outraged and shaken. They have laid bare the pervasiveness of racism and injustice in our society, and catalyzed a movement toward lasting systemic change. These tragedies require all of us not only to work for justice in the broader society, but also to look closely at ourselves individually, and at our own Ropes & Gray community.

At Ropes & Gray, black lives matter—and that should never be subject to dispute.

Ropes & Gray has always advocated for human rights, dignity, and the principles of justice and equality under the law for all. It is a commitment we have demonstrated not only with words, but with action, including through our *pro bono* program.

Events of recent weeks only confirm how important this commitment is. It is our duty to ensure that justice is dispensed fairly and equally, and that all people who need legal assistance have access to it.

#### OUR ACTIONS

- We have launched a Racial Justice *Pro Bono* Opportunities Network within the firm, strengthening our ongoing *pro bono* efforts. This new network will focus even further on addressing both near-term racial injustice and longer-term systemic change.
- We joined a consortium of more than 30 law firms to endorse the repeal of Section 50-a of the New York Civil Rights Law, a law that has served as a barrier to police accountability. Its repeal was approved by both houses of the New York State legislature and signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.
- Our partner Doug Hallward-Driemeier, with the support of the firm, signed a statement condemning the actions taken by the U.S. federal government against peaceful protesters seeking racial justice near Lafayette Square, outside the White House.

- In addition to pledging our legal skills and time to public service work, the firm has made donations to three organizations that share our principles: Equal Justice Initiative, Equal Justice Works and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. This builds on previous partnerships, including creating and funding a novel 10-year fellowship with Equal Justice Works focused on criminal justice system reform and racial justice.
- We are also taking steps internally to ensure that we stay true to our core values and address the needs of our own community. If we are to reach our full potential as a firm, we must continue in our resolve to elevate every member of our community through inclusion and opportunity, owning that each one of us bears the responsibility to determine what we can do differently as individuals and with our teams to make our firm a more equitable and welcoming place.
- On June 19, Ropes & Gray will observe Juneteenth as a firm holiday and day of commemoration. Juneteenth marks the date in 1865 when the last enslaved people in Texas learned that they were free. It is a date to celebrate freedom, but also to remember how far we have yet to go to fully realize that promise. We hope our community will use Juneteenth to reflect on the long and deep wounds of racism that have endured despite the end of slavery, and to educate ourselves on how to support positive change.

#### OUR PLEDGE

In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to reflect on what must be done to ensure racial justice and true equality. So many have worked tirelessly to accomplish change for so long; we will continue working until the fruits of those efforts are seen in our communities. We remain steadfast in our commitment.

*Julie Jones, Chair*

*David Djaha, Managing Partner*

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