Dear Downstate Community

We as members of the Daniel Hale Williams Society, the SUNY Downstate chapter of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), and Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) write a statement of support to those directly and indirectly suffering from the consequences of racism and inequality. This week we have lost another Black life in America and had emotionally triggering images and videos broadcasted on social media. The untimely and unjust death of George Floyd, at the hands of a police officer from the Minneapolis Police Department, has sparked a national uproar as people everywhere gather in protests. However, let us not forget that he was not the only one. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Tamir Rice. Trayvon Martin. Oscar Grant. Eric Garner. Philando Castile. Samuel Dubose. Sandra Bland. Walter Scott. Terrence Crutcher.

The racial inequalities that are perpetuated in the United States are proof that this system was not built for people of color, specifically Black people. Yet we are still here. It is important, now more than ever, that we are there for one another. These issues are not new; they are deeply rooted throughout our nation’s history. As future physicians we must recognize the impact that these tragedies have on the very community we live in, study in, and of which are a part. As future physicians, part of our creed involves protecting the marginalized members of society by providing medical care and addressing the underlying insidious causes and contributors towards minority stress, illness, and death. And as future physicians, we are given the tools, education, and training to do so.

Due to our positions as medical students of SUNY Downstate, we have the privilege of learning about social determinants of health and the many factors contributing to health inequity. Let us not forget about the implications that these determinants have on the health of our community when it is most important.

These tragedies have an enormous and long-lasting impact on our ethnically and culturally diverse community. Thus, when witnessing these horrific acts of injustice, remember that those affected are members of our own community – the future patients that you are called upon and responsible for advocating for.

With that being said, we may forget that as we protect others, we must also protect ourselves and our mental well-being. That is why it is so important for us to be supportive of one another and be aware of the emotional, upsetting, and stressful times we are experiencing. While it may feel impossible to focus on the task at hand, try to remember why you went into this profession. The seeds of today will bear the fruit of your tomorrow. As one of our own members beautifully said, “We might not be able to change the world, but we can change the world for each patient we meet.” That change begins with our studies. We strive to support those in our community in whatever way possible. Included below are hotlines, podcasts, access to therapists, apps, and websites dedicated to alleviating the emotional toil and uplifting others. Please know that we hear you, we see you, and your feelings are valid. Feel free to reach out if you need someone to talk to in a safe and comfortable environment.

Sincerely,
Daniel Hale Williams Society and Latino Medical Student Association
SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University – College of Medicine
Hotline Websites and Useful Resources

• Downstate’s Office of Diversity Education and Research
  o Reach out to one or more staff members of the Office of Diversity Education and Research for a listening ear or someone to speak to (Dr. Carla Boutin-Foster, Dr. Anika Daniels-Osaze, and many more)
  o Also reach out with new projects, ideas, or pieces that are created to discover opportunities to disseminate and build upon them – letters, abstracts, journal entries, art pieces, etc.

• Downstate Student Counseling Services
  o Counseling@downstate.edu
  o (718) 270-1408
  o Note: Downstate students receive 8 free sessions per year (either individual or group sessions); simply email to make an appointment

• https://www.doingitwell.org/ - Emotional wellness project committed to inspire and assist communities, especially urban communities of color - hub of other tools/resources

• Podcasts
  o The Homecoming Podcast by Dr. Thema
  o Black Therapist Podcast
  o On One with Angela Rye

• Therapy Considerations
  o Therapy for Black Girls - https://therapyforblackgirls.com/
  o https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists
  o https://openpathcollective.org/

• Apps
  o https://apps.apple.com/us/app/covid-coach/id1504705038

• Link to the Minnesota Freedom Fund, collecting money for bail for the people of Minneapolis: https://minnesotafreedomfund.org

Michelle Obama Becoming:

“The choice, as he saw it, was this: You give up or you work for change. ‘What’s better for us?’ Barack called to the people gathered in the room. ‘Do we settle for the world as it is, or do we work for the world as it should be?’ Hearing them, I realized that they weren’t at all smarter than the rest of us. They were simply emboldened, floating on an ancient tide of superiority, buoyed by the fact that history had never told them anything different.”