

Your law license can really make a difference, perhaps in ways you never imagined. I am devastated by the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others, which have laid bare for all to see the brutal realities of systemic racism. The fight for justice is a struggle that belongs to all of us and I have come to the realization that I, as a lawyer, and we, as a profession, can do more. We must do more. "Access to justice" isn't just a saying; these words represent the cornerstone of the rule of law.

These horrific events are part of a long history of oppressive racism against Black Americans tracing back to the birth of our country. Importantly, a lot of open, frank dialogue (long overdue) is necessarily occurring in places where you don't normally see it. For example, at a recent meeting of my own law firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, a number of my colleagues spoke powerfully of how systemic racism impacts their lives on a daily basis. I was told to read an article that was distributed by one of my Black colleagues entitled "Your Black Colleagues May Look Like They're Okay – Chances are They're Not." If you haven't done so I respectfully urge you [to read it here](#).

I was particularly struck by two things during this meeting: First, how many of my Black colleagues are experiencing racism in their lives on a daily basis; second, by the number of my colleagues (of all races and backgrounds) who expressed a strong desire to do something, to make a small dent and to contribute to the fight to eradicate systemic racism, yet didn't really know what they could do. I've checked with my friends and colleagues at other firms, and have concluded that my firm is certainly not unique in that regard.

It is time for our second-to-none Northeast Ohio legal community to galvanize our "feelings" into "action." We as lawyers have been given much, and must step up our collective game and use our training and our law licenses to help address this scourge on our society.

These are difficult and complex issues. While there are many worthy and important action steps, there is a way that we can address injustice as a legal community. Legal Aid is the perfect place to channel that energy and talent. And now is the time for you to do so, whether your practice focuses on litigation, real estate, tax or estate planning, corporate/business, criminal, employment, general, domestic relations, or any other areas.

So, here's my request of you:

Let's unite as a legal community and "do something" -- together -- to dismantle institutionalized racism and fight for social justice. Specifically, I am urging you to join with me and many other volunteer lawyers to work to help vulnerable communities. Our legal profession has a higher calling and responsibility to fight this malignancy and stain on our society.

I know we are up to the task. Please join us right now. You have multiple options based on the time you can give and the interests you have:

- Take a case to handle today! Visit now <https://tinyurl.com/TakeACaseToday>,
- Help with our right to counsel initiatives focused on eviction cases: <https://lascev.org/volunteer/housingstability/>, or
- Don't have time to volunteer? Consider a gift to support the effort – visit www.lascev.org/donationform to give online.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observed: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Our profession has a special skill and responsibility in this important fight. Join me, won't you?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Ungar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Ungar
President, Board of Directors – The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland