

Solidarity & Action

Isabel Roche – Interim President Bennington College

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Dear students, faculty, staff, and alumni,

As our nation reels in the wake of the latest brutal murder of a Black man, I am thinking first of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of color in our own community—of your emotional well-being, your physical safety, and the endurance this society unjustifiably demands of you in the face of such brutality. Nothing I write today can sufficiently respond to your pain, which I myself cannot know. This moment is not only about the stolen life of George Floyd; it is about Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Sean Reed, Tony McDade, and the countless other Black lives taken at the hands of police brutality. It is about the collective trauma of hundreds of years of oppression and marginalization.

I wish to call today on our entire community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni to stand in solidarity with this movement. Use your Bennington education to question, challenge, denounce. Join protests, contact your elected officials, stand up in your daily lives, and step into the discomfort that comes with fighting for meaningful change. Be an instrument for good without speaking over Black voices. It is not enough to condemn racism; we must all be actively anti-racist.

Bennington has a long and proud history of fighting for social change, beginning as a place that took the intellectual and artistic aspirations of women seriously in a time when no one else did. We know the courage it takes to make change, and if ever there was a moment for us to exercise that courage, to claim our role in the shaping of American culture, it is now.

In practice, this means that we must all be rigorous as teachers, peers, colleagues, and students to root out racism in all its overt and covert forms; to avail ourselves of [every resource](#) to understand the ways in which we have all been conditioned to uphold racist systems; and to identify within our own community structural forces that stand in the way of this work. We must be humble as we identify blind spots in ourselves. And we must be tireless.

Act. And take care of yourselves and each other.