

April 21, 2021

Dear Valiant,

Like many of you, yesterday afternoon I awaited the news from Minneapolis with an anxious heart. Anxious because I live in an America where I have learned, again and again, not to expect justice following the killing of Black citizens, particularly those killed by police. Even the callous murder of George Floyd—a death captured in real time for more than nine excruciating minutes—might go unpunished. So, I braced for a possible acquittal.

When the verdict was finally announced, finding Derrick Chauvin guilty on all three counts, I felt I could breathe. A bit of faith began to take root, and I allowed myself to hope that perhaps, at long last, something may have shifted.

Last year, we saw communities all across America moving with new urgency to effect real change and, I am proud to say, our own Valiant community was no exception. Members of our Manhattanville family mobilized to protest police brutality in many different ways, from an on-campus protest to an online petition. These actions sparked new diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives throughout the College and new conversations among students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

As we all continue processing the trauma of George Floyd's murder as well as those of Daunte Wright, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many, many others, it is so important to remember the power that each individual possesses to take action in the face of injustice. Just like 17-year-old Darnella Frazier, the brave young woman who chose to stand as the world's witness by filming and posting George Floyd's murder for the world to see, every Manhattanville student can be an agent of change.

This evening, in fact, students will host an event that will take place at 6:00 p.m. to discuss progress on Manhattanville's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. You can email questions in advance to thecommunityinitiative@mville.edu, and the Zoom link is mville-edu.zoom.us/j/99947647289.

For students needing space to process the impact of recent events, please remember that professionals at Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) (shac@mville.edu or 914-323-7277) as well as staff at the Clark Center and the Center for Inclusion are always available to you. And, of course, my door is always open.

I am so grateful to be part of a community that values compassion as the essential foundation for learning. As we keep George Floyd alive in our collective memory, let us honor his life and his family by recognizing and respecting each other's humanity and by continuing to do the work necessary to create a just and equitable society for all.

Sincerely,

Cindy Porter
Vice President of Student Affairs and Interim Chief Diversity Officer

