



Office of the President

And so, it is

...that we are at the end of a time that truly signifies a new beginning. We cannot deny that spring, 2020 was a tumultuous, unsettling and conflicting time that will forever, be chronicled in our hearts and minds. As I take my leave as the 8th president of Central State University, I reflect on **our** journey with fond memories and with a cacophony of emotions.

The insidiousness of COVID-19 slipped into our world, destroyed lives, hampered our sense of physical presence and invaded our mental and psychological wellness. We, as social humans are integrative and need the interactions of others to share the experiences of our personal development and experiences of our families. Our lives have shifted to social distancing and containment of our feelings and emotions and have been relegated to screen “tele-boxes.” Our adjustments have not been easy but, we made the adjustments.

Then, more insidious than COVID-19 was the blatant demonstration of racism and brutality that was televised for the world to witness. Every person with a heart became unwilling participants to the worst exhibition of racism against the American people. More specifically, African Americans have been marginalized politically, socially, economically, through discriminatory policies around health and safety; and through the exclusion of constitutional rights of being able to fully realize the American pursuit of happiness and contentment.

Racism has scarred and negatively penetrated **every** American! I say “every” because either you are a direct victim or you are oblivious. The recent atrocity that resulted in the death of Mr. George Floyd cannot be dismissed or ignored as was the case of other atrocities of deaths of other African Americans that were not televised. America cannot “unsee” what the world witnessed in horror. The lives of African American men and women matter...and it is left up to all Americans to speak for those who no longer have a life or voice.

For 133 years, Central State University’s community has been the harbor for civil rights movements by being the refuge for the disenfranchised, the neglected, the oppressed and the warriors for civil justice. They marched, petitioned, became community activists and united. Black and white students who attended Central State University learned about the power of unity and the responsibility of civic duty as presented in the 1965 Voters Rights Act. If you are a part of the Central State University community, be it administration, faculty, staff, student, alums, partners, or surrounding neighbors, your commitment to civic education and justice is an even greater, moral imperative today, just as it was in the 60s.

That education will first require thoughtfulness and humane listening to the views of others even if those views are different. It is the differences of thought and experiences that contribute to critical thinking. Secondly, the daily learning experiences should lead to the understanding of exercising the power of the VOTE. Exercising the voting responsibility is the most sustainable way to make long lasting significant differences in American society! We must take our marching in the streets to marching to the polls.

Our students are truly full of confusion and they are hurting, just as their parents, families and all of us who are pained by the acknowledgement and awakening of systemic racism and discrimination. But, I am the eternal optimist! I believe that everyone who is or has been a member of the Central State University family is committed to a greater and just society where everyone is equal and treated fairly under the American Constitution.

Our iconic University is located in tranquil Wilberforce, Ohio but our imprint is worldwide and students and graduates will carry that imprint everywhere they go. Let us help them experience a better America that they will build through their civic and community activism. Let us help them understand that *Service* is the educational gift that we share with others; that *Protocol* is the system of rules, laws and code of behavior for the betterment of all; and that *Civility* is the personal action that demonstrates respect for every aspect of human life.

Thank you Board of Trustees (*past and current*), faculty, staff, students and the best, administrative Cabinet ever; and of course, our wonderful students and alums. Thank you for your support and well wishes. I ask that you accord our new leader, Dr. Jack Thomas with the same support as he charts the University's new pathways of success!

I will always attribute a major part of my personal and professional growth to my experiences as the president of Central State University. In so many ways, Central State University is a model for diversity and cultural inclusion... and, we will do more because *we are better when we are together!*

Dr. James Hammond and I, thank you Central State University...until we meet again – *For God, For Central, For State!*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Jackson-Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Jackson-Hammond, Ed. D
President