June 4, 2020

A Time for the Baruch Community to Come Together

Dear Baruch Community,

We are living through a tenuous moment in American history. In the midst of a pandemic, our streets are flooded with outrage and grief in response to the senseless violence and reprehensible acts against our Black citizens. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd are names we should all know and always remember.

I feel compelled to write to you as your incoming president as it is more critical now than ever before for us to support each other, and to come together as a community. I share the anger and outrage of the thousands of people marching in U.S. cities large and small, as well as in communities around the world, to protest the legacy of discrimination and racial injustice that is engrained in our society. Across the countless images and video clips, I am also heartened to see the incredible diversity of people who have come together to fight for long-overdue change. Racism is not just relevant to the Black community; it is germane to us all. And only through solidarity and sustained commitment can we begin to undo the horrific consequences of racism.

Right now, there is an urgent need for us to vent our collective fury with words and with peaceful protest. Over the long term, however, we need to follow through on our commitment to change with deeds. This sentiment—this call to action for us all—was so poignantly expressed in 2008 by then-Senator Barack Obama in his speech on race in America. Twelve years later, his appeal for successive generations of Americans to do their part to dismantle racism in our schools, healthcare system, and neighborhoods still holds achingly true.
At this watershed moment, I am honored and humbled to become Baruch’s president on July 1. So much good work aimed at recalibrating society, and mindsets, is already underway at Baruch, and I vouch to renew our commitment through actions, just a few of which I highlight below:

- We will work with the faculty to reinvigorate the mission-critical areas of teaching and research in the Department of Black and Latino Studies with the guidance of Dr. Shelly Eversley, Interim Chair since January, and Interim Provost McCarthy.
- The Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, stood up in February, will refocus our effort on enhancing our diverse and respectful campus community.
- The Community Connections page, launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be expanded to support our community with a wider purpose.

As an immigrant who came to America some 40 years ago, working toward a more just and equitable society is deeply personal to me, and what inspired me, in part, to come to Baruch. I am in awe of the audacious achievements of the Baruch community—the incredible opportunity afforded to students who are largely underrepresented in our system of higher learning, and the relentless pursuit for academic excellence comparable to any top institutions of the land.

It is that audacity we need in trying times such as these, and it is vital for the students, faculty, and staff of Baruch to stay strong, to stand in solidarity, and to do our part toward a more just and equitable world.

Sincerely,

S. David Wu
President-designate, Baruch College