



February 1, 2021

By now you are well aware of the events that transpired Saturday at Xavier. A white supremacist group vandalized our campus. The group posted propaganda stickers across the Xavier Yard and we suspect destroyed the *Racism is a Sin – Black Lives Matter* sign in front of Bellarmine Chapel. Xavier was but one stop for this group, amongst others they also targeted Northern Kentucky University, Thomas More University, and Miami University of Ohio.

Let me be clear, because I must, these incidents were an attack on our community.

I feel a strong sense of violation, really—desecration, in response to this attack. I am aware, nonetheless, that part of my privilege as a white man is not fully feeling the injury and impact of these acts. These acts are intended to intimidate, to threaten, and to assault. These acts demand a response.

And we shall respond, in a multiplicity of ways.

As a University we shall continue to denounce these acts. And as our president, I will continue to unequivocally declare my belief – our belief – that *Racism is a Sin* and *BLACK LIVES MATTER*. You can be sure, as well, that we will investigate these crimes. Let me also assure you that we will leverage all of our resources to care for the safety and wellbeing of *all* our community members, in particular our Black students, staff, and faculty. These responses are, of course, not nearly enough.

I would like to borrow from a letter written by Jamie Trnka, our Chair of Classics and Modern Languages, who wrote in response to the destruction of the sign in front of Bellarmine Chapel, “Where one banner was cut down, let us raise fifty more.” Over the course of the day on Sunday, I learned of numerous faculty, staff, and students who are planning a variety of different ways to ‘raise their own banner’. Saturday’s attack, and the emerging response from our community, invite us all to ask, and in a special way invite our white community members to ask: what can we do address racism in ourselves, in others and in the systems around us? While we must express our outrage and sadness at the actions of extremist groups, it is equally important that we urgently invest in the hard, vulnerable, and long-term work of rooting out **and counter-acting** the insidious and all too prevalent forms of racism that poison our thinking, our actions and our political, educational and economic systems. The real question we must ask is, how can we be anti-racists?

As a nation, we have witnessed violence and desecration brought about by hatred and division. And as our own campus community copes with a hateful invasion and violation, we recognize that the challenges before us are great. But to be clear, and once again I must, our Jesuit Catholic university has the mission, the resources, and the conviction to build a community and to contribute to a world that protects the full dignity of all people and creates environments in which all can flourish.

Let me end by using words we often recite at Xavier, and let me invite you to hear in them an invitation, or rather an imperative: All for One and One for All.

Michael J. Graham, S.J.
President