

To the UConn Community:

As the world watched the trial of Derek Chauvin unfold in Minneapolis this month, culminating in today's verdict, it was natural for concerned citizens, activists, and commentators to focus on the broader questions raised: police brutality, anti-Black racism, the long struggle for justice in the United States, and more.

But it's important to recognize that a criminal trial is not a final reckoning with deep-rooted social forces. It is not a quest for larger truths. Criminal trials are, at heart, tests of imperfect evidence related to a specific set of circumstances. Ultimately, this trial told us little more than what 12 citizens of Minneapolis believe about the evidence they were permitted to see in court.

It is up to each and every one of us, and educational institutions like ours, to make sure the larger issues and concerns stemming from the killing of George Floyd are understood, not forgotten, and ultimately addressed.

First, and most importantly, that means a direct confrontation with America's legacy of anti-Black racism, which continues to blight our society to this day. The truth is clear to anyone who watched the unbearable video from Minneapolis last spring and so many others. There can be no progress as a society until we address the systemic reasons behind it.

These and many related issues don't have easy answers, and the discussions around them will be passionate, protracted, and difficult. But we must have them, at UConn and throughout society, if we are to make progress toward becoming the kind of society our highest ideals aspire to.

To that end, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Provost's Office are organizing [a series of panel discussions with thought leaders and scholars](#) from across a variety of fields over the coming days and I invite you to participate.

The outcome of a criminal trial in Minneapolis doesn't absolve us of the debt we owe to George Floyd, and to future generations. We may face setbacks. We may even fail. But justice – as opposed to the nuances of law – requires that we try.

Sincerely,

Tom

Thomas Katsouleas
President