

# Unity in a Time of Crisis

June 07, 2020

Dear Friends, We have arrived at a pivotal moment in the history of our country's struggle to provide equal justice and open arms to Black Americans. To students of history, you may be reminded of the story of Emmett Till. He was a young Black teenager lynched in 1955 for talking to a white woman. Only when his mother displayed his mutilated body in an open casket did the world finally take notice of the prevailing state of affairs in this country. This helped drive important civil rights reforms. We have proclaimed success time and time again — with Emancipation, the adoption of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution, *Brown v. Board of Education*, civil rights legislation, and on and on. But recent events make clear that true equality in this country remains more the exception than the rule — more of a dream than reality. The manner and circumstances of George Floyd's death, sadly, were not unique. But coming at this time, in this way, this was just too much to bear. I reached out this week to all of our attorneys and professional staff to ask them to share their thoughts and their feelings with me about where we are in America at this time. They told me stories that broke my heart. We are all different, of course, and prejudice and cruelty have not been reserved for Black Americans, but our country has an especially long and troubled history between our "white" and "Black" people, and we are still not in a good place. My Black friends and colleagues carry the pain, the scars, and the burden of being treated all too often like criminals, thugs, and inferior life forms merely for existing or for being present where very few Blacks are seen — or welcome. All Black parents must prepare their sons and daughters for the inevitability of being stopped, interrogated, frisked, handcuffed, or worse, without cause. Is this equality, America? Is this okay? This is most definitely not okay. This is not how anybody deserves to live, let alone any citizen of our country. This is not how any of us would want to live. We can and must talk about law reform, government programs, legislation, and other means to address this injustice. Some of us can, should, and will contribute to institutional reform. We have been engaged in this as a law firm, and we have rededicated ourselves to continuing to do our part. But more than this, each of us holds the key in our own hands and hearts to making the biggest difference. We hold the key to love and hate. The choice is ours. This is not even a close call. – Gary Sasso, President and CEO

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# Featuring



Gary L. Sasso