It is with deep sadness and outrage that the Marshall University Department of Social Work acknowledges the untimely death of George Floyd. As colleagues and fellow Americans, we watched in horror as members of a profession espousing “to serve and protect” allowed one of their own to systematically kill an unarmed black man who was suspected to have passed counterfeit money in a retail establishment. This incident and other acts of racism involving Christian Cooper and Ahmed Arbery are just the most recent examples of racial injustice and disparity that have continued for too long.

Acts of violence by their very nature weaken our democracy and place the existence of our freedom in danger. Citizens of a free country should not be afraid to walk down the street concerned that they will be attacked and or arrested because of the color of their skin or the way they talk. We stand with the Black community in working to eliminate racial injustice in all of its forms and are asking for a Call to Action for social justice and human rights:

* We stand with the Black community in working to eliminate racial injustice in all of its forms.
* We call on all those who are committed to serve and protect the human race and to maintain a civil society, to condemn these outrageous acts against our fellow man.
* We call on law enforcement agencies across the state and nation to renew their commitment to the community by forming citizen advocacy councils that work alongside police chiefs to evaluate department policy and procedure and revise out-of-date practices that fail to promote de-escalation and citizens’ right to due process.
* We call for an end to the militarization of America’s law enforcement agencies made possible through the transfer of surplus military hardware to local police departments, a practice that arms police as combat soldiers with tanks and weaponry resulting in excessive force and occupation-style presence in communities where people of color and their families reside.
* We call on state and local school boards of education, administrators, and teachers to develop curriculum that thoroughly explores the experiences of cultural and racial minorities in the United States so that all students through the lessons of history, literature, arts, and science bear witness to the many contributions, struggles, and the sacrifices made by people of color, citizens, and immigrants that have benefited all our people and strengthened our nation.
* We call on elected officials to replace empty rhetoric promising unity and equality with courageous action and demonstrable results. For far too long people of color have put their trust in the democratic process, waiting for leaders to deliver on promises only to see decades pass with little change noticeable in day to day life. People of color from all racial and ethnic backgrounds contribute immeasurably to this culture and economy and by virtue of their humanity and in accordance with the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness deserve political representation and unfettered access to safe communities, quality education, well-paying jobs, universal healthcare, and justice under the law, the resources that make the American dream a possibility.