



## **On Racial Inequality**

Dear Kennedy Center Friends,

My heart aches watching the images of the unjust death of George Floyd, and the global demonstrations in response. These events force us to confront the underlying issues of racial inequality. For me personally, this is a time of reflection and introspection regarding my own prejudices and moments of inaction. I truly believe that to rid our communities of racism, we need to start with ourselves—even when it is uncomfortable.

At the Kennedy Center, we encourage learning by exploring the world. I have always loved international study because it pushes me out of my comfort zone and encourages me to open my mind to new ideas, peoples, and ways of living. It is so easy for us to surround ourselves with what is familiar, but it is when we leave our

comfort zone and interact with others that we are able to confront our own racial prejudices and biases. At the October 2018 BYU Forum, Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*, said, “There is power in proximity.” He encouraged the BYU community to get close to those on the margins of society, to change the narrative by having difficult discussions about race. He said we need to be willing to be uncomfortable and do uncomfortable things.

President Russell M. Nelson calls for us to repent and “abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group of God’s children.” As a Kennedy Center community, we want to follow the prophet and proactively help build bridges of understanding, rather than walls of segregation. Recently, President Kevin Worthen expressed his commitment to fostering difficult conversations about race as a BYU community, and we are working to facilitate discussion through the Kennedy Center. But, for such conversations to be productive, we each must look deep within ourselves, be humble, and seek to be filled with God’s love. It takes a willingness to be vulnerable to reach out and learn from those that are hurting. King Benjamin teaches us how:

*Humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith . . . . And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and **be filled with the love of God** . . . ye shall grow . . . in the knowledge of that which is just and true. And ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably. . . . (Mosiah 4:11-13)*

There is power when we live the gospel of Jesus Christ and are filled with God’s love. I have hope in that power. I have hope in our students who desire to make a difference in the world. We all need to be part of the solution. It will require educating ourselves, listening to others with respect, and confronting our own biases in order to bring racial equality to our communities. In the weeks ahead, we will continue sharing individual stories, speakers, courses, books, and more to help us come together in this essential work.

With Love and Respect,

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