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Mines President Paul C. Johnson: An opportunity to listen, learn and challenge ourselves

Dear Oredigger Family,

Last month, Mines' senior leadership challenged ourselves and our community to learn how to be more effective advocates and allies for those who experience racism and bias. We also acknowledged that "Our Achilles heel is that many of us do not understand with depth the issues at play today. Most of us do not come from backgrounds where we have had to endure racism."

I've always felt that sharing and listening to personal stories is one of the most effective ways to develop empathy and understanding and had anticipated that this would be part of our plan in the fall. Initial listening sessions with students and alumni are being scheduled, and from those, we will develop a plan for broader campus sharing and listening.

Our students and alumni have initiated their own platform where they are sharing their stories. I urge you to visit @bipoc_at_mines on Instagram (<https://minesnewsroom.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=167226f7594b9b48b63b493f2&id=cdc75f2c94&e=95d155b748>) and read the stories collected there.

Be prepared—they are difficult to read, in part because of the raw emotions communicated by the authors, and in part because these are, after all, the experiences of members of our Oredigger family. They will provoke an emotional response from you, perhaps anger, hurt or frustration. For me, it was initially a heavy sadness that members of our community had those experiences and frustration that these things still happen today—in our community, to and by members of our Oredigger family.

Eventually my emotions turned to admiration and appreciation for the authors of these stories, and I hope that yours do as well. Sharing their personal experiences is not easy, and writing about something forces you to relive it. We owe our students and alumni great thanks for taking the initiative to put their stories out there where we can all read them and learn from them.

I also hope that reading and reflecting on these stories solidifies your commitment to not tolerate racism or bias in our community and to identify meaningful ways in which we can act individually and as organizations to effect positive change. For example, our faculty have offered to champion changes in our curriculum and classroom experience, our Admissions and DI&A teams are working together to increase our success at recruiting students of color, Mines Athletics is conducting listening sessions and working with their coaches, and our Student Life team is identifying best practices for onboarding new students and educating them on our intolerance of racism and bias and what they can do when they witness racist or biased behavior in student-to-student interactions.

We have to do this together—students, faculty, staff and alumni—and we can. I'm confident in that based on our Oredigger community's response to last month's challenge—from the public statements of commitment to private emails from our faculty, our DI&A team, alumni, student organizations, Student Life team and campus police.

This is a start. There's much more to plan, do, evaluate and discuss. Let's keep climbing and effect change that we'll all be proud of.

With gratitude,

PCJ

Paul C. Johnson, President and Professor

ABOUT MINES

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