



Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed the horrifying killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Each of these stories has forced us to confront centuries of social injustices that have plagued our nation. As President of the Student Government Association, it is my duty to serve as an advocate for all voices at the University, especially when many students are hurting and longing for answers. Today I am speaking to offer encouragement and to address the roles we all must play in order to move forward.

To the students of The University of Alabama, I ask for you to do one thing: listen. Listen to understand; Listen to have educated conversations; Listen to make our community and world more inclusive for all. This is not the time to point fingers, but a time to wrap our arms around each other and begin to develop plans to ensure that our campus and communities are inclusive, equal, and fair for all.

We must, as a community, use our voices to stand with and become allies with those who have been historically marginalized. Continue to advocate for fair and equal treatment of all citizens and members of our community. Let's use every medium available to advocate for justice, whether that is having important conversations with your friends and family, posting on your social media, or speaking out every single time you see an injustice happening right in front of you. I ask that you utilize the gift of empathy. Put yourself in your fellow classmates', sorority sisters', or fraternity brothers' shoes, and understand that the world is not the same for all of us.

Speaking as a black man in America, I understand what it feels like to endure the hardships, struggles, and injustices that frequently impact people of color. I know the pain you feel. I have had to wipe away tears, listen to music, and pray. I ask that you stand strong, be courageous, and continue to fight for what is right. I understand we have had some weary days and still have some hills to climb. As we advocate for equity and equality, let us remember to do it in such a way that will keep us safe and ensure our voices are heard. I ask that you all engage in dialogue with those around you who struggle to understand the injustices that minorities experience by creating positive, open spaces where genuine, productive conversations can occur.

To all incoming students, I want you to know that we at The University of Alabama strive every day to make sure that this campus is inclusive for all. We have fallen short at times, but in those moments, we have learned and pressed forward, determined not to repeat history. I want you to know that I will continue to fight every day to ensure that your experience and environment is safe and transformative. I want you to know that The University of Alabama community is one big family — a family that I am proud to say I belong to. I ask that you come to this campus with an open mind and an open heart. You may want to believe that you do not see color, but you do. We all do. Over the next several years, you will have the opportunity to engage in many meaningful experiences, and they will be made even more meaningful if you open your heart to those around you. Look for experiences that intentionally expose you to people and ideas different from yourself.



Finally, I ask that we come together as one and continue to positively change the world. Change is not easy; it will take time. I ask that each of you be willing to be an active part of this change, to work every day to make our campus a more inclusive and understanding environment. I am here to serve each and every student at The University of Alabama, and I will. I ask that you serve your fellow classmates with respect, kindness, and love. This is OUR campus, OUR city, and OUR world. We have the chance to make it better, let's not miss the opportunity.

Best and Roll Tide,

Demarcus Joiner
109th SGA President