



# INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF TRIAL LAWYERS

## **The Academy's Commitment to the Rule of Law and Equal Justice**

As you all are aware, numerous organizations in the past two weeks have issued press releases and proclamations regarding the George Floyd death in Minneapolis specifically, and racial injustice generally.

While these statements of solidarity are important, we do not simply want to issue a press statement. Therefore, we choose instead to engage each and every one of you directly and personally in a great and challenging endeavor. We want to hear from our collective Academy family as more fully described below.

From its founding in 1954 and through the present day, the International Academy of Trial Lawyers has been fiercely devoted to the support and encouragement of integrations and harmonious relations of law with the physical, medical, psychological and social sciences and the enrichment of human culture and welfare, both in the United States and abroad. IATL's commitment to the Rule of Law and Equal Justice is not a hollow promise. For decades, members of IATL have fought injustice and prejudice.

Our history is a rich one. We pioneered bringing the Rule of Law to China for over two decades. We have significantly worked to expand the Rule of Law in Ireland, Italy, Uganda, and Latin America. We are currently partnered with the National Judicial College with regard to training Judges. Just in the past year, we have markedly expanded our previous focus, attention and effort respecting human trafficking, restorative justice for youth offenders, and the unacceptable lack of due process plight of asylum seekers at our southern border. Now, however, even in the face of our past serious commitments and accomplishments, we can, and we must, do more.

We have not, however acknowledged sufficiently the role systemic racism has and continues to play in the lives of Americans, providing privilege and opportunities for white Americans while intentionally disadvantaging and denying those same opportunities to our black, brown and native American brothers and sisters. Now, however, we must learn more and do more to understand the ways that racism continues to operate in the lives of black, brown and native Americans and work to dismantle those policies and practices. Our inaction in the face of this pervasive discrimination signals our complicity. Hollow statements only serve to sooth guilt and do not advance meaningful change.

We cannot simply say "all lives matter" or "we don't see color." Those bland statements dishonor the experiences and history of our black brothers and sisters and ignore the fact black, brown and native American people have not been afforded equal protection and consideration in our criminal justice system and, more broadly, in society. We must use our collective words and actions to remedy the injustice and prejudice that are evidenced by these realities which recent events prove, once more, in such overwhelming terms.

But before we act, we must listen. We must listen to those who raise their voices to protest racism and discrimination around the world. We must ask them how we can be an ally in the fight for racial equality and then join their fight. We must listen to voices different from our own, and we must thoughtfully consider and apply what we learn. We need to carefully listen to our very own Fellows together with their families who personally know prejudice first hand.

While we are still listening and learning, we must also act. We must defend those whose rights to speak on matters of personal and national importance are being threatened or abridged. We must do whatever is necessary to ensure our public voice includes and amplifies voices that have traditionally been disregarded or silenced.

We must use our platforms, talents, and reach to ensure that anyone who abuses power is held accountable. We must challenge our colleagues on the Bench and in the Bar – and ourselves – to advocate for justice and fair treatment in our justice system and in our society. We must demand that the use of police powers create bonds of trust and fairness rather than oppression, unfairness, injury, and death.

History will surely be critically written about these difficult times. The IATL must rise to this latest challenge to the Rule of Law as it has done in the past. We are an International Academy with a worldwide and passionate family that must lead with courage and heart. We will listen, learn, and work to see that the pain and struggles of these last weeks are not wasted. To remain silent is an unacceptable retreat from the strong principles and storied history of our Academy.

We now ask all of you to commit to two things:

**First**, get involved now in your local community and do something that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people who are suffering racial injustice and discrimination.

**Second**, help us fashion an effective and impactful direction for the Academy in this effort by sending your thoughts and ideas as Fellows, Spouses/Significant Others to us:

“What needs to be done?”

“Who can and must we listen to?”

“Who can be our teachers?”

“How can we as individuals and an International Academy help?”

Please [click here](#) to give us your ideas. Share your thoughts and your efforts and progress, or not, being made in your communities here in the USA and around the globe where our Academy members live, work, and promote equal justice for all under the Rule of Law.

As the rallying words ring out “We are in this together”, and, together we can make a meaningful difference in fulfilling the promise of our International Academy to promote justice and equality for all people everywhere in the world. This is clearly the time to come together to achieve just that.



Cliff Edwards, President



Roman Silberfeld, President Elect

### **About the International Academy of Trial Lawyers**

The Academy is an elite group of trial lawyers representing both sides of the Bar: plaintiffs' and defendants' counsel in civil litigation and prosecutors and defense lawyers in criminal cases. Fellowship in the Academy is by invitation only, and trial lawyers are invited to become Fellows only after an extremely careful vetting process that includes discreet inquiries of both judges and other trial lawyers of high standing. Fellows come from firms of all sizes, from international firms with thousands of lawyers to very small firms. While the majority of the Fellows come from the United States, the Academy also includes lawyers from more than 30 other countries. The Academy's general purposes are to cultivate the science of jurisprudence, promote reforms in the law, facilitate the Administration of Justice, and elevate the standards of integrity, honor and courtesy in the legal profession.