



Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J. , President
Black History Month: a Time for Reflection and Learning

Dear Friends,

As the semester continues to get under way, please allow me to call our attention to the annual celebration of Black History Month, an opportunity to honor the contributions and impact of Black Americans and to recommit ourselves to the goal of racial justice.

As I reflect on the spirit of this month, I am grateful for the opportunity I had in 2020 to be part of the creation of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) Anti-Racism Examen. Like the daily Examen found in the Spiritual Exercises, it is rooted in both a sense of gratitude and honest self-examination. And I am delighted to tell you that, in response to the direction of our Board Chair, Mr. James Slattery, the trustees will continue their engagement with the Anti-Racism Examen at their upcoming February meeting, building on the good work already done at the Board's last meeting in September.

Through the Examen project, I shared my own realizations in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd of discovering aspects and legacies of Black history beyond those I had previously known. I was reminded by the truth that however much knowledge we acquire, we all remain students. And so I am anxious to continue my learning.

As an avenue of ongoing learning, there is much to gain from re-visiting the seminal letter, "Interracial Apostolate," of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., to American Jesuits in 1967. In it, he provided an affirmation of the importance of knowing our history and acting from it. Fr. Arrupe writes: "I have alluded to the difficulties in the progress of race relations, from the Declaration of Independence to the present day, to point out a vital historical lesson. Principle does not guarantee practice."

As a Catholic and Jesuit University, we must continue to expand our knowledge about Black history and the contemporary realities and vulnerabilities that exist because of it. I am proud of the initiatives we have taken toward this goal so far, including the offering of courses across numerous disciplines that cover topics related to diversity and race, the anti-racism work by our board mentioned above, dedicated space for our Black Student Union, a number of substantive events planned for Black History Month and, later this semester, research on the University's own institutional Black history shared by a subcommittee of the Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

I offer you my prayers and accompaniment as we journey together during the days ahead and ask yours in return.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph Marina, S.J.
President