

Diversity & Equity › NALP Joins Its Members in Fighting Racism

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The events of the last several weeks, including the murder of George Floyd on Memorial Day, have shaken all of us to our core, but the problems of racism and bias in American society are longstanding and run deep, dating back to our history of slavery. As all of us grapple with recent tragic events and our role in them, we join with you in examining our practices as we work together to build a better and more just future.

NALP has long championed the fight for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession, but at this moment in time, we see that our historic efforts are not enough. **NALP calls on its members to join with the association in fighting racism** in the legal profession and in American society, in redoubling our efforts to provide greater access, support, and development opportunities for law students and lawyers of color, and particularly in committing to greater efforts to support and promote the careers of Black law students and lawyers.

"NALP deplores discrimination and unfair employment practices whenever and wherever they occur including within the NALP organization itself. Such practices taint the recruiting process and undermine the ethical foundations of the legal profession." Since 1989, this strong language has been part of NALP's formal commitment to non-discrimination and fair access in legal recruitment. (See NALP Board Policy 101.) Nonetheless, years of NALP research have documented the relative lack of diversity in the legal profession, particularly among the partnership ranks of law firms.

Despite enormous efforts by law firms to make progress, bias in the profession has maintained inequities long past when many other professions, most notably medicine, have become much more diverse. The legal profession has made notable gains in the representation of Asian and Latinx lawyers, progress that must continue. In contrast, Black representation among law firm associates has suffered years of decline, and only topped 2009 levels in 2019.

**Let this time embolden all of us to renew our efforts** to address more directly and more forcefully systemic bias and prejudice in the legal profession, and in particular the many ways that the profession has failed Black lawyers and the Black community. NALP members are in a unique position to help their institutions make real change to ensure that law schools, law firms, and other legal employers and organizations become truly inclusive.

### NALP commits to taking the following actions:

- Establishing a single web page portal to gather all of NALP's resources on diversity, equity, and inclusion, that also provides a place for members to post and share resources and policies that support their own diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.
- Providing a portal to gather information on public interest organizations and pro bono opportunities for our members and the lawyers and law students they serve to support the work of civil rights and

criminal justice reform.

- Ensuring that diverse voices and particularly Black voices are included in all NALP's publications and educational programming.
- Providing additional support and resources for the work of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Section.
- Using NALP research to document and call out inequity in the profession.
- Launching a new member demographic census to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in all NALP's work.
- Developing a pipeline to attract more professionals of color to the legal careers profession and NALP membership.
- Consistent with NALP Board Policy 100, Diversity within NALP, working to ensure that the NALP Board of Directors is broadly diverse, including intentionally supporting, mentoring, and sponsoring members of color into NALP leadership roles.

Finally, **let us unequivocally state that Black Lives Matter.** We will not rest in continuing to do everything in our power to fight against centuries of racism and the harm it continues to inflict on all of us, our communities, and our colleagues of color.

**Beth Moeller**

President, NALP Board of Directors

**James G. Leipold**

Executive Director

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