



July 26, 2019

Dear Honors Students:

Our SMBHC community at The University of Mississippi gives witness to what can be each day: we gather to exchange ideas, challenge each other's thoughts, and wrestle over the crucial values that make our democratic Republic distinctive. We live within an academic community that recognizes the dignity of each person.

We live in strange and difficult times. Emboldened white nationalistic thought threatens our Republic and intends to strike fear and spread terror. We are not immune to such acts of impunity. We deplore racist behavior.

I opened *The Washington Post* this morning and my heart sank. I saw the photo of three, armed UM students, posed before the bullet-riddled memorial to Emmett Till, the young Chicagoan brutally murdered in our State because he unintentionally challenged the social boundaries of white privilege and power. The message was clear: they celebrated that brief triumph of white nationalism over that 14-year-old boy. Emmett Till's murder spotlighted the brutality of racism in the South and created an awareness that fueled the Civil Rights movement.

There are those who want to reverse the gains of the Civil Rights Movement, and we must acknowledge that sad fact. We denounce those intentions. We, the SMBHC administration, faculty and students, will work harder to protect the extraordinary momentum made by our academic community since 1962, and we will always stand with our minoritized students.

We welcome you to our academic community in less than one month, all students – of all backgrounds – to enjoy the liberty to exist, to congregate, to debate, and to break bread together without fear and retribution.

And we will defend that liberty with our pen, our voices, and our presence always. It is our mission to cultivate citizen scholars, requiring deep personal reflection of our past, transparent reckoning with our present, and elevation towards the best versions of ourselves.

See you soon,

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