

**From:** Alan D Grossman adg@mit.edu

**Subject:** Message to Members of the MIT Biology Community

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Dear Members of the MIT Biology Community,

There is a lot going on. My feelings and struggles the past few days are likely reflective of those shared by many. Quite honestly, I've been having a difficult time trying to write a message about this. But I know that many of you are hurting far more than I and in a much more visceral way.

I am having the most trouble coming to grips with the killing of George Floyd on Friday in Minneapolis, and the death of other people of color who have been killed largely because they are people of color. They have been killed by the very people who are supposed to be protecting all of us.

We are in the middle of a global pandemic. It has a reasonably well-defined start, and it is easy to imagine how it will end. It will end. Although difficult, and for far too many, terribly painful and heartbreaking, we can manage this. People may disagree on the best, safe path forward. Globally: How do we limit spread of the virus? How much lockdown is useful and for how long? And, how and when do we reopen our societies. Locally at MIT: How do we restart research and teaching? When and how do we bring back our undergraduate students? We do not yet have answers, but we know the general framework needed to get through these challenges and we can even estimate realistic timeframes for doing so.

Then, I come back to the killing of George Floyd and all that it represents. This, and so many acts of hatred have been going on for a very long time. Is there an end in sight? I do not know. Like many, I feel helpless on a grand scale. What can we do? What can I do? What will I do?

I will help repair the world, our world, one person at a time.

I will be more aware of the effects my words and actions have on others.

I will be supportive and tolerant of individual differences and identities, especially of those who do not look like me.

I reaffirm, reinforce and recommit to the core values that are central to who I am as an individual and as a member of the Biology Department. I will continue to welcome and encourage talented individuals of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities, and individuals with disabilities, to participate in our teaching and learning and research endeavors, to treat everyone respectfully, and promote tolerance and inclusivity. We all benefit when we embrace and act on these core values.

Each of us can help to repair our world one person at a time, if we choose. We must all strive to make these behaviors habitual, automatic, everyone's norm.

Together we can also help repair the world by focusing more broadly on our local, national and global communities. We can find support and strength by working together. Each of us will choose our own way, and there are many ways. If inclined, we can march, sign petitions, support political candidates, support social causes, and engage in social action. There are many organizations through which we can make a difference. Most importantly, we need to

support "equal protection of the laws" and the ideal that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law".

There is much that I can do.

There is much that we can do.

There is much that we must do together.

It starts with how we treat each other. We are dismayed at what is happening in our country. Together, we can help repair our world.

Together, we must support those who are most vulnerable and most affected by the current violence and fear directed towards people of color. We must support each person, one at a time. I am committed to this.

Respectfully,

Alan

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