

From: Jonathan Bagger, APS exec-office@aps.org
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To: fisherp@mit.edu



Dear colleagues —

On this, the 92nd anniversary of the birth of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is appropriate to step back and reflect on the fundamental values of science and how they intersect with the founding ideals of the United States, and more generally, with the hopes and aspirations they inspire for people everywhere.

Science is the search for truth. Hypotheses are validated by facts that are derived from experiment. This lies at the very heart of the scientific method, an approach to inquiry that has advanced humankind for over 500 years. It is the application of science that lifts people from poverty so they can lead healthy and productive lives, and it is the application of science that will finally end the pandemic. In the words of Dr. King, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.”

Since 1899, the mission of the American Physical Society has been to advance and diffuse the knowledge of physics. As physicists, we seek to create light where there is little. We seek to uncover universal truths. And we do our best to hew close to our values, which at APS include truth, integrity, and the scientific method.

To fulfill its mission, each year APS advocates for science in a completely nonpartisan way. This year, we will continue to do so—precisely because so many of the challenges before us require science for their solutions. Therefore, the 2021 Congressional Visits Day will continue, despite everything else that is happening in Washington. And on February 3, our members and staff will be meeting with congressional representatives from across the political spectrum. The challenges we face demand nothing less.

Nevertheless, another APS core value is “speaking out,” and that is why I am writing to you today. We at APS categorically condemn last week’s attack on the US Capitol, both for its assault on the fundamental institutions of US democracy and also for its distinctly white nationalist tenor. We cannot stand silent in the face of such violence.

How should we respond? Myself, I embrace the wise words of Dr. King, who said that “Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.” I believe that last week’s events call on us to recommit to eradicating injustice in all its forms. As Dr. King wrote from the Birmingham jail, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

In that spirit of social justice, on my first day as APS CEO, building on the APS core values of diversity, inclusion, and respect, I signed the [CEO Diversity Pledge](#), joining 1,600 other CEOs from across the country in committing to build a more diverse and inclusive culture within our organizations.

But more is required, and that involves you. We, in the physics profession, need to redouble our efforts to create a more diverse, welcoming, and inclusive community—and APS, through programs like [APS-IDEA](#), stands ready to help. We do this not only for our science, but also because it is right.

The days and weeks ahead will be challenging as the US moves from one administration to the next, as the world struggles to contain the pandemic, and as we seek to reset global relations in a time of tension. But again, in the words of Dr. King, “We must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future.”

I hope you will join me in sharing that faith.

Jonathan Bagger
Chief Executive Officer



APS Headquarters: 1 Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740

Editorial Office: 1 Research Road, Ridge, NY 11961

Office of Government Affairs: 500 44th St NW, Washington, DC 20045

Office of Government Affairs: 529 14th St NW, Washington, DC 20045
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