

## FROM THE WARDEN

Yesterday, George Floyd was buried in Houston, TX. The funeral evoked both the appalling and unnecessary squandering of human life as if it were something casually expendable, and the very necessary impact of the revulsion against this killing which has spread around the world.

Last week, I signed a letter in The Guardian which expressed, on behalf of the Heads of Houses of Oxford Colleges, our condemnation of systemic racism and our commitment to work together towards a world where it is removed.

In the College community, it is important to be unequivocal. I want to state that there can be no place for any kind of racism in New College. We have a zero tolerance for racist comments or behaviours by staff or students of any kind whatsoever.

I appreciate the stances taken by both the MCR and JCR communities at recent meetings. The JCR passed the motion that 'New College JCR maintains our total opposition to racism of any kind'; the MCR has separately expressed its views; and both common rooms are engaged in the debate in a highly constructive way.

New College is a diverse student community – over one fifth of our students already in the JCR are BME, and considerably more in the MCR. Our aspiration is to increase this diversity, and particularly so in relation to our Black British profile. Coincidentally, we have just completed a Diversity Audit, which is a sound basis for action across all common rooms. We have taken a lead in some areas of the student experience which cater specifically for the needs of our BME students. And we pride ourselves on being an open and tolerant culture.

However, it is too easy to be complacent. Moving forward, there are some steps to be taken to review our position in relation to diversity, and how it can be improved – ranging from welfare, to training, to hiring and recruitment, to academic resources. I am keen to explore innovative measures, both within our control, and in concert with the University, where I am arguing for specific actions to be taken which break some of the bureaucratic blocks.

In another letter, which the Heads of House have sent to students today, we identify ourselves with the vision of Black Lives Matter: "imagining and creating a world free of anti-blackness, where every black person has social, economic and political power to thrive". Being true to that vision requires societal commitments and changes. The role of higher education in this will be critical. So much of what we normally do in teaching and learning looks to the future; and, as a College founded on 'Manners', we should be proud of our obligation to prepare people for lives and work in which there is an opportunity to go out and lead the pursuit of change.

**Warden**