CJS Statement on Racial Equity in the Justice System

July 2020

The Criminal Justice Section of the American Bar Association stands in solidarity with all who demand an end to racism, inequality and injustice. For more than 400 years African Americans have been victims of violence at the hands of both governmental and private actors and have suffered discrimination in every sphere of American society.

The intolerable killings of George Floyd, and countless others continues this long history of lethal violence against African Americans, and the covid-19 disproportionate impact on African Americans is undeniable evidence that historic discrimination continues to severely impact the African American community. It is long past time that we acknowledge that the continued existence of racial inequalities in the law, the legal profession and the legal system cause unbelievable pain and burden for our clients and colleagues of color.

And it is long past time that we commit to the proposition that we shall and must not be complicit in the structural oppression that plagues not only African Americans, but all Black and Brown and LGBTQI and Gender Non-Conforming people.

As ABA President Judy Perry Martinez stated, lawyers “have a special responsibility to address” injustices that exist “through laws that unjustly and disproportionately impact people of color.” We accept that responsibility as a core element of our mission. We will take immediate steps to ensure that racial equity and inclusion are not only embedded in our organizational values but are embodied in our actions. Accordingly, we will fight to end white supremacy, systemic racism, oppression and inequities in the criminal justice system and in the legal profession; commit ourselves anew to work even more tirelessly for these goals, and call on all members of our Section, the American Bar Association, the legal profession, and concerned individuals to make the same commitment.