

Dear AUNE Community,

In this time of covid and racial justice demonstrations, The Justice Leadership Council (JLC) is building hope to encourage justice in ways that accord with AUNE's social justice mission. During these challenging times, it is even more urgent that we hold ourselves accountable to the JLC mission and the mission of our campus. The following definition of social justice was created by *the University-wide Diversity Statement Task Force, and approved in 2012*: <https://www.antioch.edu/new-england/why-au/mission-values/>

In radical recognition of our mission and purpose, we pledge to actively engage in ongoing development as a wholly inclusive community. To this end we will consistently, deliberately and systematically strive to be appropriately responsive to the myriad dimensions of human diversity, such that none are marginalized and all experience justice and empowerment. Moving beyond tolerance toward inclusion and the celebration of our differences, we will courageously embrace any resulting challenges as they arise, recognizing that the responsibility for this rests with each and every member of the community. We assert that we will move expeditiously toward our goals through an ongoing commitment to courageous self-examination and respectful and honest interactions, which will lead us to the creation of formal and informal structures, policies, programs, and services that will give life to these ideals on our campuses and as we touch the world around us.

JLC is looking for people who might want to join with us as we try to live this mission for social and environmental justice. Why might you be interested in getting involved with JLC this year?

1. As demonstrations fill our cities, as we search for ways to end the lynching of black youth, and as we witness the knee of racism bearing down on our throats--or those of our neighbors and friends--, how do we respond with courage? St. Augustine said, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage: Anger at the way things are; and Courage to see that they do not remain that way." When asked to select the greatest virtue, Maya Angelou responded, "Courage. Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage."

2. We have a mere 5 months to influence the next election. We have only 8 years left to deal with climate change before millions of species – and millions of humans -die. We live in a country rooted in racial injustice, class injustice, colonization, and patriarchy. Our problems are real and pressing. We may not win every victory for humanity...there is so much work to do. Neither can we afford to be paralyzed by the enormity of it all. Yet each one of us has minutes, months, and years to make a difference. How do we, individually and collectively, set our priorities?

3. We live in a time of great fragmentation and divisive identity politics where polemics have replaced dialogue. How can we counterbalance those forces? How do we engage in courageous conversations that move us forward? What steps do we need to take *now* to build creative coalitions?

4. America is divided. Take a look at the armed “demonstrators” demanding individual freedom in a time when acting communally may be the very thing that saves us. Now, try to look beyond their guns and angry faces to see grinding poverty, subpar schooling, military as a tool of escape, fluctuating unemployment, hunger, and mountains of crushing debt. (The direct translation of the Latin word “mortgage” means “death grip.”) Their lived experience is the opposite of freedom, yet they yearn for it. It takes courage to look beyond our privilege to see, hear, and touch the hurt that comes from being forgotten. We need more than courage to look through someone else’s lens. We need a commitment to the kind of compassion that only comes from seeing deep pain and ignorance masquerading as rage. How can we be truly present to people whose views differ from ours? The Dalai Lama said: “Compassion is the radicalism of our time.” How do we cultivate compassion in the way we interact, ally, and challenge one another?

5. The best antidote to despair is action. Actions speak louder than words. Taking action means having a clear strategy with realistic goals, objectives, and firm deadlines. Taking action allows us to celebrate milestones. What actions can we commit to taking over the next 3, 6, 9 and 12 months? What do we hope to celebrate this time next year?

History books are full of small and mighty movements that grew from continual reflection and change. Where would we be if those who came before us had not had the **courage** to act? How will our courage find expression?

All of us know of someone whose life emulates/emulated **compassion**. How will our work show compassion?

How can we extend our community to build **creative collaborations**?

How do we determine which actions we will **commit** to building as a community?

What will we **celebrate** about diversity, justice, and inclusion?

Please accept our invitation to join The Justice Leadership Council (JLC) this fall as we plan and host workshops, and work to compile a list of resources (e.g. [BLM](#)) on race, class, gender identity, and more. Better yet, consider becoming a member of the Council. We are especially looking for new members from the Education and Clinical Psychology departments. We meet the first and third Monday of each month.

Help us reflect together to choose the social and environmental justice actions we will commit to and carry out in this coming academic year. Help the AUNE community act with compassion and courage to celebrate creative collaborations.

Yours,

The Justice Leadership Council (JLC)

Elle Ashton

Linda Drake Gobbo

John Dunham

Morgan Grant

Tomoyo Kawano

Alesia Maltz

Kali Skodack

Chevon Stewart

Shelley Viles

Kimberly Waller

Francine Ziperstein