

THE DIVERSITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM: VOICES FOR JUSTICE

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“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”

~Frederick Douglass

“Southern Barbarism,” 24th Anniversary of Emancipation, Washington, DC, 1886 in 4 THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS 434 (Philip Foner, ed., 1955).

This year, the mission of the Diversity and Social Justice Forum – providing a forum that can give expression and representation to a wide spectrum of progressive and diverse voices at Chapman – is more important than ever. The chasm between “liberal” and “conservative,” “red state” and “blue state,” threatens to engulf shared values that sustain our society. It pits “us” versus “them,” it obscures our commonalities, it breeds suspicion and hate, it kills compassion and empathy. And in so doing, it threatens the achievement of justice and ultimately, as Frederick Douglass warned, the security of our society.

Dialogue can help span this ever-growing divide. But the tools for true dialogue face their own threats. We live in a world where elected leaders – grown adults with monumental responsibilities – trade insults and barbs on social media, a behavior of which parents of teenage children would not be proud. Facts, the basis for any true dialogue, have become optional. False narratives, and just plain falsehoods, provide

an alternate reality to suit any worldview, no matter how extreme and hate-filled. And most importantly, key voices have often been silenced, removed altogether from the dialogue.

Publications such as our Diversity and Social Justice Forum are invaluable in creating a space where dialogue can begin. The goal of this Forum is to improve the world in which we live, and to do so in a way that fosters understanding: to find common ground despite differences, to bring attention to overlooked societal ills, and to discuss and debate proposed solutions to the problems in our world.

In these pages, facts matter. Facts are facts because they have been researched exhaustively. They are not a collection of partial and distorted truths cobbled together to support an untenable position.

In these pages, respectful, professional commentary matters. These articles are not 140-character invectives. They are insightful, provocative,

carefully written products of research and critical thought.

In these pages, the voiceless are heard. The articles in this year’s *Forum* present the views of groups in our society whose voices have been silenced through marginalization and oppression: indigenous peoples, bullied youths, minority youths, the victims of corporation-sponsored or corporation-abetted human rights violations.

The theme of the 2016 *Forum* is “Silenced Justice.” But justice cannot be silenced, because it is not a voice. It does not speak for us. It does not exist on its own. Justice is achieved through the voices and actions of individuals who fight in ways big and small for their own and others’ right to live a safe, fulfilling life.

Justice cannot be silenced, but dialogue can. This Forum recognizes that many voices essential to dialogue have been silenced through fear, oppression, and inequality. It recognizes that with those voices absent, the dialogue is incomplete, and thus the bridge towards justice obstructed. It

provides a platform for voices calling for justice. And for that, our community of scholars, educators, lawyers, and soon-to-be lawyers is grateful. Thank you, to all of the authors, speakers, students, professors, and members of the Chapman University community who support the Diversity and Social Justice Forum, for being a voice for justice.