

MEMO

To: Our UWLA Family

From: Robert W. Brown, President

CC:

Date: January 21, 2021

RE: The Fierce Urgency of Now!

Forgive me for not connecting sooner. I, like most of us, have been left paralyzed and speechless after witnessing the events of the past several weeks. I watched in horror as the sacred and hallowed halls of our U.S. Capitol were desecrated seemingly indefensibly from the attacking mobs and shameless display of sedition that occurred. We watched once again as bigotry, hatred and fear took the life of innocent people right before our eyes. This time one of those killed was none other than an officer sworn to protect and defend the very rights and liberty of those who perpetrated his murder.

Many times, as a young lawyer, I walked those sacred halls in awe and pride at what it meant to be a citizen of the United States of America. I was so proud to be a lawyer walking in the Capitol building, where the law of our land has been handed down for centuries. The place where every citizen of the U.S. has been allowed to enter and participate in the great experiment that is our republican form of democracy. It is the very place where our nation's forefathers crafted our constitution. A constitution for all citizens which aspired to create a more perfect union, with life liberty and justice for all. Union?? Dare I add union? All I witnessed several weeks ago was division, rioting and chaos. I felt humiliated and helpless to defend our country and the rule of law that I and all my fellow attorneys are sworn to uphold as part of our required oaths. I am ashamed and embarrassed at how the rioters and seditionists treated the hollowed halls of our country. We are a nation of laws, that the world looks to for guidance but that day, all the world saw was lawlessness and division.

In 1787, two weeks after the start of the Constitutional Convention, George Washington wrote that he was pulled out of retirement because of the fear that in addition to anarchy and confusion, the greater risk to the fledgling country was that the political chaos created fertile ground for exploitation "by some aspiring demagogue who will not protect the interest of his country so much as inflame

dissension and unrest to promote his own ambitious views.” For Washington, “demagogue” was a forensic term that described a well-known class of political actors, known since Greek and Roman times, who obtain power through emotional appeals to prejudice, distrust, and fear. The constitution was framed to have built-in offsets and balances to counter the accrued power and influence of any one individual or group of individuals over the collective will and interest of those subject to such potential oppression.

Sarcastically, we should be “glad” that there has been such an open display of the efforts of one group to maintain power and authoritarianism over those who would otherwise aspire to share such power. If any of us would doubt for a moment that our great democracy and our inalienable liberties that would pertain thereto could ever be compromised, we were awakened from our stupor last week. In the chaos that ensued, we were jolted by the revelation that our lives could be changed in an instant; in a matter of a day; by a mob that would trample over our hallowed grounds and thus the sensibilities that we thought are sacred to our country and its citizens.

But we did not lose our dignity overall. Our democracy and liberties have been protected and will be preserved. But it is now imperative more than ever that we all respect, protect and uphold the rule of law. We must rededicate ourselves to the propositions and principles upon which our country was founded. Most importantly, whether we like the outcome or not, we must vigorously protect and hold this principle above all else, that there shall be a peaceful transfer of power and authority in accordance with the constitution. Further, we must rise above the rule of “might makes right” and acknowledge our sacrosanct humanity by embracing and holding steadfast to the “rule of law”. Despite what was on display in those vivid images that we all saw, we must not sink to the level of animals ever again or lose sight of the fact that we are all part of the American family. Lincoln once reminded us, a house divided cannot stand. Thus, we must control our fears and treat each other collectively and individually with the utmost human dignity, integrity and respect even in times of conflict. That is where the rule of law steps in and controls our emotions and calms the violent chaos through the orderly exercise of our human intellect and collective brotherhood.

As part of the UWLA family, I would encourage you as business leaders and lawyers to refresh your commitment to promoting a lawful, compassionate empathetic, peaceful, and loving society. We must be proactive and aggressive in finding ways to achieve a more harmonious way of overcoming the fear-based divisiveness that is fueling the conflicts that are occurring in our communities across our country. It is up to each of us to tamp down the hostility and fear arising from ignorance, bigotry, and prejudice. I know that this is easier written

than done, but the first thing that we need to do is to put aside our individual hurt and hostility and attempt to find the way to reach out to those whose opinions that we do not share to attempt to find common ground for the resolution of discord and disagreement.

I believe this was best expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. some sixty-four years ago in a letter he composed while incarcerated and later delivered at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama on December 25, 1957.

“First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one's enemies without prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us. It is also necessary to realize that the forgiving act must always be initiated by the person who has been wronged, the victim of some great hurt, the recipient of some tortuous injustice, the absorber of some terrible act of oppression”... “This simply means that there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies”... “The reason why we should love our enemies, is that love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature, love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power.”

I have lived through an extremely fascinating time in the history of our country. I have witnessed first-hand the struggles and conflicts of our society attempting to reconcile itself with the perils and dangers occasioned by pandemic, environmental abuse, war, the threat of mutually imposed nuclear annihilation, and caustic cancer of a metastasized systemic oppression on generations of Americans. That says nothing about the advent of technology, artificial intelligence and the global proximity of everyone brought about by the internet. All of these have their existential dangers. But also, they bring new opportunities for us to exhibit the strength and knowledge to meet, overcome and exceed these challenges. That is what we aspire to do at UWLA. Our vision is “Liberation Through Educational Empowerment”. Most people focus initially on the “liberation” aspect of the statement. I want us to focus on “educational empowerment”. By focusing on educational empowerment, we can effectively attack the root causes of fear, distrust and ignorance. You can't reason with ignorance! Therefore, the remedy is to erase and eliminate ignorance with

knowledge and educational awareness, thereby uplifting everyone, individually and collectively.

Less anyone have any doubts, we will prevail once again over the crisis presented. We will bring our collective minds and resources to bear to overcome and even thrive in the midst of this seeming chaos. However, we must continue to learn the lessons and glean the knowledge presented by each seemingly horrific experience. What can we learn from this experience? We can't take the balance of liberty and the intersection of our collective experiences for granted. Someone else just might take advantage of the vulnerability presented by the fears and distrust and thus capture and separate us permanently from our liberties, our independence, and our brotherhood as Americans.

As we embark on a new era for the United States with the inauguration of President Biden, I urge all of you in our UWLA family to have a return to optimism and positivity and a laser focus on uniting our country. As we go through this transition, we must not forget to reach out to our acquaintances, friends, neighbors and colleagues and embrace them for who they are as individuals. Embracing their similarities and differences and loving them for their dissimilarities and differing viewpoints. Unity is our strength by incorporating the strong parts of all the different elements of the people that constitute our culture. Let's not turn that strength against each other. That way, we will emerge happier, stronger and better equipped to forge and participate in a more perfect union based upon our collective grasp of the virtues of a democratic society. It starts with each one of us. We are bigger and better than what we saw displayed several weeks ago. Let's prove it by our actions and our words in the days to come. What we will also find is that by embracing our differences and encouraging the best parts of our segments of society to come forth, that it will push each of us to individually and collectively become better people and a better society.

Remember this quote from *To Kill a Mockingbird*: "*You just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fightin' with your head for a change.*"
-Atticus Finch

The United States of America and the University of West Los Angeles each consider themselves "families". One a subset of the other. We pride ourselves as being representative of that term, "family". Consider what the term family means in practice? I think that it equates to what happens on a special holiday when all of the family gathers and comes together to share the experience of being with



University of
West Los Angeles

9800 S. La Cienega Blvd., 12th Floor
Inglewood, CA 90301

West Los Angeles Campus
310.342.5250

one another. But what really happens? There are arguments, breakups, quarrels, and hard feelings exactly because of the close relationships involved. But after a while when the emotions cool and the realities of the unbreakable connections set in, what really occurs? We recognize our inextricable bonds and make each other laugh at ourselves and our petty differences and ask a loved one to pass the dessert. We start to find ways to heal! It all begins with love, family and community. There, we feel better already. Let's make the world a positive place and thanks for being a part of the UWLA family. I remain...

Your humble President,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert W. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Robert W. Brown
President