

Epoch: Going Beyond a Racial Reckoning

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Michael Rogers: Hello everybody, welcome to the inaugural installment of *Epoch: Going Beyond a Racial Reckoning*—an annual joint symposium created by the Seattle University Law Review and the Seattle University Black Law Students Association. My name is Michael Rogers, and I am the Symposium Chair for the Seattle University Law Review.

Today's symposium brings together an incredible group of highly accomplished speakers for a critical discussion about the legal education space as it pertains to Black law students in the aftermath of the events of 2020.

Before we begin, I would like to give everyone a brief overview of today's events. For our first panel, we will welcome five highly accomplished law school deans for a roundtable discussion and a questions and answers session. After our first panel, we will take a 15-minute break before starting our second panel. After the break, we will welcome our highlighted author—Marissa Jackson Sow—for a discussion on the theory of whiteness as contract.

Now, I would like to turn it over to Ray Williams—President of the Black Law Students Association—and Hannah Hamley, Editor in Chief of the Seattle University Law Review.

Rayshaun Williams: We want to first recognize that we're hosting this symposium on stolen Duwamish land. We enter into this space from all across the country. I'm here with you from the South Puget Sound and Hannah joins us from the Bay Area, California.

I would like to wish everyone a good morning and welcome from wherever it is that you're currently joining us. We all appreciate you decided to spend a few hours with us.

As we enter into the symposium, I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that we wouldn't be here sharing this space today if for not the early transitions of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Sean Reed, and many, many more.

Hannah Hamley: Unfortunately, like many other white-dominated institutions, it took these untimely deaths and the subsequent movement of the summer of 2020 for Law Review to make an effort to engage

meaningfully in anti-racism work. Historically, Law Review has not prioritized or expressly acknowledged the importance of rejecting white supremacy, addressing inherent biases, and dismantling systemic racism. In the summer of 2020, Seattle University Law Review committed to be an active participant in anti-racism work and to address and readdress our institutional failures.

Rayshaun Williams: As mentioned in the program description, the events of 2020 have provided another opportunity for us all to scrutinize and examine systems that perpetuate racism, a complex issue. Early in the process of putting together these remarks, I was reminded of the words of those who came before me.

In 1961, James Baldwin, along with other distinguished essayists, literary critics, and poets were gathered for a radio discussion. When asked by the radio host about being Black in America, James responded, in part, “It’s a great temptation to simplify these issues under the illusion that if you simplify them enough, people will recognize them. I think this illusion is very dangerous because, in fact, it isn’t the way it works. The complex thing can’t be made simple. You simply have to try to deal with it in all these complexities and hope to get that complexity across.” We hope to use his platform to continue to highlight these complexities, amplify the work being done to address, and dismantle systemic racism.

As community activists, Chris Paul said, “Not just offer Black folks affirmation of who we are, but confirmation of who we’ve always been.” Thank you. With that, I’d like to hand it over to Majidah Cochran, the Western Region of BLSA, the Black Law Students Association, Chair.