

ALSTON & BIRD

AN OPEN LETTER FROM RICHARD HAYS, CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING PARTNER



“As a firm with its roots in Atlanta, the cradle of the civil rights movement, we have a long history of involvement in the advancement of civil and human rights and liberties for all.”

Last weekend, Rayshard Brooks was killed in Atlanta, one more in a long line of Black Americans who have died in police-related incidents. Coming on the heels of the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, we are reminded again how this nation’s legacy of racism continues to damage and destroy the lives of Black people. The movement and action we are seeing across the nation and around the world to advance the cause of justice and racial equality give us hope that we can, finally, begin to confront racism honestly. It propels us to work together to turn hope into reality.

We are asking ourselves hard questions about how Alston & Bird can spur lasting and meaningful change in both our firm and the communities we serve. Our conversations focus on race and belonging. We are challenging ourselves to evaluate what we are doing as individuals to step up and speak out against hate and to champion equity and inclusion in our day-to-day lives. Diversity and inclusion have been and remain core values of our firm. Now more than ever, we stand committed to embodying those values in all that we do.

As a firm, we are also taking action. On Friday, June 19, we will pause for a “Day of Learning and Reflection” in observation of Juneteenth, which will include a firmwide conversation with several of our African American partners about racism and how it has affected them in their personal and professional lives, followed by an early firm closing to encourage all of us to take time to reflect on what we have learned and can do to fight racism. In New York, we were one of more than 30 prominent law firms [writing](#) to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and state legislative leaders to call for the repeal of a law that shields police disciplinary records, a reform that quickly passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law last week. And in Georgia, we joined almost 300 companies statewide, including clients The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, and The Home Depot, in signing a [letter](#) to the state General Assembly urging it to pass a hate-crimes law as part of a strong and united stand against “targeted violence and bigotry.” We will continue to lend our support to similar efforts to fight racism and hate.

And we will be doing more. Internally, our Diversity Committees, Pro Bono Committees, Practice Group Diversity Partners, Office Heads, and Practice Group Leaders are actively pursuing a number of opportunities in the fight for racial justice, including initiatives focused on equity in retention, promotion, and inclusion in our firm as well as charitable giving to and volunteering for nonprofit organizations active in this fight. Under the leadership of our Diversity & Inclusion Partner, Angela Payne James, we are sharing educational resources and training, facilitating pro bono and volunteer efforts, educating our people about key legislative initiatives, and encouraging firmwide coordination of our many regional and group-based racial justice efforts. We are planning and will announce additional specific initiatives in the near future.

As a firm with its roots in Atlanta, the cradle of the civil rights movement, we have a long history of involvement in the advancement of civil and human rights and liberties for all. We especially have a focus on supporting and promoting justice, equality, and inclusion. We are committed to do more, to be leaders through action and endurance, and to act by example, not rhetoric.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hays', with a large, sweeping flourish at the top.