

Dear Students,

If you have seen the footage, reporting, or stories about the shooting of Walter Wallace in Philadelphia, you are experiencing the grief, exhaustion, and anger of an all-too-familiar death of a Black American killed by police officers. Yet another person, with mental illness, yet another Black American—this time in our own Philadelphia-area communities—has met an untimely, violent death at the hands of police.

We are sad and troubled—as individuals and as Haverford leaders dedicated to anti-racism and social justice at Haverford and beyond.

We write because our sadness is accompanied by alarm. That alarm is for YOU. While we all might be tempted to join protests about this tragedy, we are imploring you to temper that impulse. Now is not the time to go to Philadelphia. Our fear is that for every righteous protestor in the street, there are other actors afoot; we have seen this across the nation far too often, in cities large and small, in college towns and urban centers. There are individuals who might seek to spin this moment out of control and cause harm and havoc. Joining a protest off campus not only would not bring Walter Wallace back: it could play into the hands of those who might seek to sow division and conflict especially in vulnerable communities.

Don't put yourselves in harm's way this weekend. Let's come together to make our voices and demands heard safely, in community here on campus and virtually—safely in terms of COVID-19 and of the risk of individuals who would harm you further for harm's sake. Let's fight for democracy at the ballot box and then let's hold elected officials accountable for putting in the programs, resources, and reforms that make tragedies like this a real thing of the past.

You received the notice about a special Community Worship on Friday, 4-5pm in Founders Courtyard. Consider silent protests. Consider vigils (socially distanced, of course) on Founders Green, on every lawn we have. If you plan such a vigil and share that information, we will show up.

PLEASE THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS OVER THESE NEXT FEW DAYS. Please STAY SAFE. Please continue to care and act when you see injustice. Let's work together to find ways through our determination, talents, and creative approaches to enact laws and policies that no longer allow such actions to signify who we are as a people.

In sadness, love, and concern,

Wendy and Joyce

Joyce Bylander
Dean of the College

Wendy Raymond
President