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To: The John Jay College Community

RE: Black History Month

Celebrating Black History Month offers an important opportunity for us to recognize the many achievements and contributions Black Americans have made in our country. It's a time to honor the folks who had the courage to open the doors for those coming after them. It's a time to commend the current trailblazers among us. And, it's a time to affirm our own ability to make a difference in the world. John Jay is proud to host a series of [events](#) designed to educate, engage, and empower our community about the Black experience in America.

Historically, the final outcome of the Civil War was the official abolishment of slavery in this country, but African-Americans continued to endure the devastating effects of racism and discrimination long after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. The oppressive and violent nature of racial segregation laws came to a head in Alabama in the 1950s, uniting folks in the fight for equality and igniting the Civil Rights Movement. To fully grasp the events surrounding the Civil Rights Movement—and to contemplate the roles that they can play in the future—this past January, a group of our Honors students traveled down to Alabama. There they learned about the history of race in America by looking through the lens of the African-American experience. Our students retraced the steps of Congressman John Lewis and the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as they walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. They confronted our country's painful history of racial segregation at The National Voting Rights Museum, The Civil Rights Memorial, and The Southern Poverty Law Center. And, at the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), [The Legacy Museum](#), and [The National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#), our students learned about the thousands of racial terror lynchings that happened in America, and they connected that brutal legacy to today's mass incarceration.

As a 62-year-old woman who grew up during the Civil Rights era, and whose parents experienced segregation themselves, it was a privilege for me to see these historical events through the eyes of our students. What inspired me most on this trip was the depth and quality of the questions our students asked. They clearly are active participants in their justice-focused education, and in Alabama, they demonstrated the wonderful job our faculty is doing educating them. Listening to them filled me with hope, because the future of our country is in the hands of these thoughtful, perceptive, courageous students. The Honors 2020 Alabama Civil Rights trip educated our students

about our country's Civil Rights history, but it also left them with a profound sense of responsibility and possibility for the future—and I couldn't be prouder of them. To experience the journey our students took, please read the [reflections](#) our students shared in their writing projects, and watch the [video](#) where I share my reflections about the trip.



I look forward to seeing everyone at the activities planned for [Black History Month](#). During this time, I hope that there's a heightened awareness of our intertwined histories. Black history, Latinx history, Native American history, and LGBTQ+ history are all interconnected. Appreciating the links between our stories, our struggles, and our triumphs brings us closer together, uplifts us as a community, and motivates us to continually move forward toward a more just world.

Thank you,

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