

# OLIVER SCHOLARS

## THE CEO CORNER: SPECIAL EDITION

### BUFFALO SHOOTING TRAVESTY

On Saturday, May 14th countless other Americans from across the country found ourselves joining the Buffalo, New York Community in mourning in the wake of an anti-Black terrorist attack that took the lives of ten people at a local grocery store.

The attack occurred against a backdrop of growing deep political, economic, and social division the likes of which I could not have imagined when I first became a teacher in New York City. The attack occurred at a moment when the naming of white supremacy as a sociopolitical and economic construct has put many educators - white and Black - in the line of fire of decision-makers. The attack occurred at a moment when efforts to expand the educational canon to include the lived experiences and broad contributions of people who are not white, and male has raised the ire of the people who have benefited most from a system that was designed to permanently and immutably disadvantage some and uplift and create opportunities in perpetuity for others.

It is unnerving to think that you are vulnerable to violence simply because of the color of your skin. Some of us have been lulled into believing that racial violence was exclusively a by-product of 200 years of African enslavement in this country. But Jim Crow, which endured for a century following emancipation, wasn't just a legal system - it was a system of unbridled and unchecked brutality that often relied on the torture and murder of Black people to maintain the status quo. And there are still "Sundown Towns" - towns that do not want Black people in their municipalities after dark - in 2022. How can we move forward if we won't face the truth of who we have been? How do you imagine a new social order when you have not contended with how race shapes beliefs and identity today?

I hope that going forward our country will revisit and reimagine the role of "gun culture" and why it's important to enact gun control laws. I hope that going forward we will think about the increasing role of social media platforms to inflame division and amplify misinformation and "alternative facts". I hope that we will find a way to combat the extremism that has gained a foothold in the hearts of so many Americans and figure out how to reverse it.



At Oliver Scholars, we will use education as our tool to challenge, deconstruct and dismantle white supremacy. We employ a diverse curriculum to give our scholars the opportunity to question, challenge and grapple with the reality of what the false construct of race has done to our country - so that they can devise solutions to change the trajectory of our country. Oliver Scholars is built on three foundational pillars - Scholarship, Leadership, and Service. We lead with love. We learn with open minds. We give back to the communities that made and sustained us.

And we will remember the names of the people who lost their lives in Buffalo is a sobering reminder that this work is important and that an education is not complete if it can only center the few to the exclusion of so many:

- Aaron Salter**, 55, Retired Police Officer
- Ruth Whitfield**, 86, Wife and Mother
- Katharine Massey**, 72, Activist Working Against Youth Gun Violence
- Pearly Young**, 77, Operator of Community Food Pantry
- Heyward Patterson**, 68, Gave Rides to Isolated Residents
- Celestine Chaney**, 65, Great Grandmother and Cancer Survivor
- Roberta Drury**, 32, Assisting Her Brother Who is Recovering from Leukemia
- Margus D. Morrison**, 52, Father of Three
- Andre Mackneil**, 53
- Geraldine Talley**, 62

We say your names. We won't forget.

*Dr. Danielle R. Moss-Cox*