



LETTER TO STATE BAR OF TEXAS

LAW STUDENTS FOR BLACK LIVES

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Dear State Bar of Texas,

Recently, we have come to learn of comments made by the new State Bar of Texas president, Larry McDougal, condemning the Black Lives Matter movement as a “terrorist group” and threatening election workers for supporting the movement. While we are encouraged to see that he has apologized for such hateful and ignorant comments, we simply do not believe that his apology is enough. As the president of the State Bar of Texas, it is his duty to set a moral example for all lawyers in the state. Expressing such views as he did not only jeopardizes that duty but also suggests that all Texas lawyers support such bigoted views. As future lawyers of Texas, we want to vehemently voice our displeasure with such an assertion.

While we understand that the “terrorist group” comment was made five years ago, the comment was wildly inaccurate, ignorant, and racist even then. Asserting that BLM wants to kill “not [just] police officers but also white Americans” always has been a falsehood peddled by conspiracy theorists and anti-Black charlatans. President McDougal’s recent threat against an election worker for wearing a BLM shirt underscores that President McDougal’s beliefs have changed very little if at all. BLM has consistently been about peacefully promoting the fair and equitable treatment of Black people in a country that far too often disregards Black lives as expendable. The fact that the head of a state organization in charge of who becomes a lawyer would subscribe to such blasphemous claims against BLM endangers the trust we as future lawyers should have in the system when it comes to aiding BLM.



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We believe that people can change. We are counting on it. However, President McDougal has taken no meaningful steps to demonstrate that he has changed nor has he offered meaningful plans as president of the Bar that reflect a change. Tangible actions that would reflect change include: commitment to attending racial sensitivity training or a class on racial bias; creation of a program to address racial inequities in the justice system and the legal profession; donation to organizations committed to highlighting Black voices and repairing Black communities. A years-delayed apology, without more, rings hollow.

We echo the call to action by the African-American Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Texas. And we strongly encourage President McDougal and the Bar to implement the suggestions from the AALS, including public acknowledgment by President McDougal of the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement and the appointment of at least two AALS members to the Presidential Task Force.

We respectfully ask President McDougal to commit to the fair treatment of all lawyers—and all Texans—by taking these actions or step down from his role as president of the State Bar of Texas.

Signed,
Law Students for Black Lives