



BOSTON ATHENÆUM

June 3, 2020

To our community:

The events of the past nine days, since the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, have been emotionally devastating. This moment follows the tragic deaths of too many other African American people who have died in days and centuries past because of their race. I'm writing today to acknowledge the pain being felt in our Athenæum community, in Boston, and across the United States.

While we are all affected, we are not affected equally. For our Black members, library staff, and neighbors, this is a personal, visceral reminder of this nation's history of systemic racism, and the terrible, frequent injustices that continue today.

Many of you have joined or supported large-scale protests in our beloved Boston parks and neighborhoods. For all of us, this is a clear opportunity and a unique moment to condemn racism and injustice. On that shared understanding we can start conversations and seek a path toward healing. I expect that together we will find important ways to strive toward a better future for all.

For the Athenæum, that path will need to include a variety of approaches. Most importantly, we must commit to treating each other and every visitor who comes to the library with dignity and respect. We will find ways to examine and acknowledge the Athenæum's historical connections to the trade of enslaved people. We will also find ways to share with our community a broader range of our rich collections and to represent more accurately the wealth of talent those collections contain.

The Boston Athenæum is dedicated to the discussion of ideas. We bring to those conversations a long historical perspective. In the months to come, we will collaborate with partners and leaders of color to host a series of events that allow for exploration of questions of race, justice, and equity.

As a community and as a country, we need to come together to heal today's wounds and address long-standing problems. As a library and a beacon for study and advancement of the humanities, the Athenæum fosters individual discovery and collective discourse. I will work with the team every day to achieve that vision and create an inclusive, welcoming community.

Recognizing that this is my first opportunity to speak directly with members of the Athenæum, let me say this is the start of what I expect will be an active dialogue. Thank you for being part of our community. I welcome your thoughts at any time.

Sincerely,

Leah Rosovsky
Stanford Calderwood Director