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June 16, 2020

To Members of the Judiciary and the Bar of Virginia,

On the frieze at the top of the front steps of the Supreme Court of the United States is a short but profound statement: "Equal Justice Under Law."

Article 1 of the Constitution of Virginia states:

"That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke as a prophet when he caused a nation to consider his words from Birmingham Jail. We need to hear them again: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

While words may be inspirational and motivating, to have any lasting impact they must be followed by lawful action.

As Judges, we must take all steps possible to ensure that in the courtrooms of the Commonwealth, all people are treated equally and fairly and with dignity under the law. It is a moral imperative that we do so.

As lawyers, members of the Bar of Virginia, we must provide legal services to those who otherwise would be unable to afford a lawyer. As judges and lawyers, we must encourage our brethren at the bar to make pro bono services a priority in our communities.

At this time, we face many challenges and uncertainties. We must join together to be a part of the solution to problems and difficult circumstances we face. The racial divide we

experience in this country can only be bridged by personal efforts to develop new relationships in the communities where we live and work. We can do it ---- together.

Donald W. Lemons
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia

Justice S. Bernard Goodwyn

Justice William C. Mims

Justice Cleo E. Powell

Justice D. Arthur Kelsey

Justice Stephen R. McCullough

Justice Teresa M. Chafin