

Mt. San Antonio College
Division of Student Services
Statement of Solidarity

Dear Student Services Colleagues,

Every act of injustice or bias should be an act of injustice and bias against all of us. We must make ourselves vulnerable and open to sharing pain, frustration, anger and healing collectively. The way we make a change is to fully acknowledge that we are not all treated equally. We must put forth every effort to understand, support, join and make a difference. We have been reflecting on the murder of George Floyd and subsequent events that have ensued, which for some of us has triggered generational trauma. This Statement of Solidarity is both a reflection of how this impacts our work well as our division's Call to Action.

As a large, public higher education institution, Mt. San Antonio College must assume a responsible posture in the wake of the George Floyd murder as well as other injustices based on race. We stand for teaching the truth, be it historical or current. We provide safe spaces for open dialog and exploration of learning. We also stand committed to the values and purposes of equity, inclusion, and social justice. We cannot sit idly by and accept this tragic injustice as just another unfortunate, racial incident. It is much more than that. It is a call for change. It is a call to come together and to say, "This is not acceptable!" "This has no place in our society!" "No individuals should be persecuted and killed."

Racism and bias continue to be critical issues of concern and destruction. We believe that we learn from history, but when history repeats itself, we question what difference has any of these unfortunate deaths, mostly of African American men and boys, made. We cannot let the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Trayvon Martin (to name a few of many) just be "symbols"; their memories must incite action. We will continue to listen to the hurt, anger, fear, frustration, and angst our Black students, faculty and staff have expressed for themselves, family members, and community. Their voices is our call to action to move beyond critical conversations, requiring difficult yet honest self-reflection at all levels across our institution. This demands that we examine our policies and practices, behaviors and attitudes, curriculum and programming, and institutional culture that perpetuate inequity and serve as obstacles to social justice.

As a community of educators responsible for our community of students, we must take a stand against White supremacy, institutionalized racism, and a stand against racism and microaggressions, of assumptions that certain individuals can get away with mistreatment and even death of persons of color because of their privileged positions. Mt. San Antonio College stands in solidarity with members of our greater community who share in this outrage and sorrow, that yet another member of our Black community has fatally fallen victim at the "knee" of unchecked power and cavalier violence.

Our division represents the future of our communities and our nation, through education and the student services we provide. We value the rights of all individuals and respect diversity as a sense of richness, not something to be feared or condemned. Our diversity at Mt. SAC is our strength. Through educating and supporting our students, our contribution to the world is to guide and mold individuals to be open, compassionate, respectful and peaceful in their relationships with others and in their acceptance of those different than themselves. Standing up for justice is not just an ideal, it is a must.

Our teaching-learning process must continue to embrace opportunities to learn from one another and to take a position that when one of us among us is wronged, we are all wronged. Our duty and our responsibility is to do something, to take a stand and to make a difference.

Our MMI Voices tell the truth most poignantly and keep us humble, help us to focus, challenge us and lead the way ...

- *That video just hurt my soul.*
- *Our anger as students needs to be heard.*
- *America did not become racist in 2020. But for the availability of cell phone cameras, we have visual proof about what Black folk have been saying has been going on for over 400 years.*
- *We have to think ahead about where we can go or not go.*
- *I can't be portrayed as ghetto. Being black gives you less room to make mistakes.*
- *You're saying the younger generation doesn't know respect? Who taught this generation?*
- *It scares me. From where I grew up, I never had to deal with this. I now know that I might have to go through it. It's made me feel like self-loathing as an African American and part Cherokee. It has made me self-hating.*
- *Physical bruises can heal but the mental bruises and damage to the heart don't go away. Ever.*
- *Colorism is a big thing. The darker you are the harder the reality. I always worry about my little brother because he is darker than me. He gets stopped and mistreated more than me. Just because he is darker.*
- *These are conversations that take place in black homes every single day.*
- *Why do we have to die to start talking about changing the system.*
- *We don't have to fight for justice when things go wrong. We can fight for justice every single day.*
- *It's not enough to just be not racist. We have to be anti-racist.*
- *I'm tired of my mom being so fearful wondering how I am, thinking that she's gonna lose her only son cuz I'm a pass away before she do.*

This is not just another incident, it is our charge and our ethical and moral responsibility to respond swiftly to social injustices in a proactive and continuous basis. We must look at our policies and our procedures. We must adapt how we treat and serve our students. We must look at our services and our accessibility to support and work to close the gaps that we know exist and look to fill the gaps that we have yet to identify.

We stand in solidarity with all individuals and groups who have continued to suffer pain, death and injustice at the controlling hands of others who believe themselves to be superior and self-righteous. We stand in solidarity, and in sorrow, as a college community that believes in human dignity and fair treatment for all people. We stand in solidarity with the commitment that we have a responsibility to learn from this tragedy and to make a difference going forward each and every day.

In Solidarity,

Student Services Team
Audrey Yamagata-Noji, Ph.D.
Vice President, Student Services