

Statement from the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies and Las Maestras Center

June 15, 2020

From the faculty, teachers, and associates of the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies and Las Maestras Center at UC Santa Bárbara:

Para nuestra comunidad – the parents and familias of our students, nuestro/as vecina/os in Goleta, Lompoc, Santa Bárbara, Santa María, Ventura, Oxnard, and Santa Paula and to all our colegas de consciencia:

Escribimos con coraje.

Escribimos con urgencia.

Escribimos con esperanza.

Escribimos en SOLIDARIDAD.

The murder of George Floyd was the spark that led to the uprisings across the world: another murder of an unarmed Black man by a white male police officer. What made it different, this time around, was that this cop had his hands in his pockets staring back in defiance at a Black teenager by the name of Darnella Frazier, who filmed him in the act of murder. She ensured that we all witnessed what took place. After all, he thought himself entitled, after all he believed he would never be punished. After all, to him, the Black man under his knee was less than fully human. End of story.

But it is not the end of the story. Soon after the recording was released people took to the streets to demand justicia. Weeks after Floyd's murder people continue to fill the streets across the U.S. and the world demanding justice for Floyd and countless Black people killed by state-sanctioned violence: Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, Freddy Gray, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Megan Hockaday, Rayshard Brooks, and on and on.

We write to you today because, in the face of this growing movement of political outcry, our Latina/o communities weigh heavy in our minds and hearts and many questions arise:

UC SANTA BARBARA

How do we see ourselves as Latina/o people in the United States in relation to race? Do we see our own familia beneath the knee of this horrific act of arrogance? *Or are we the ones kneeling there with our hands in our own pockets of prejudice?* Have we not felt the knee of American racism on our own collective neck? Have we not seen anti-Blackness within our own familias and communities? At first glance, these protests and the nightly news discussion of them may seem very Black/White and we may wonder where we as Latina/os even appear in this picture. *Where do we stand? How can we as Latina/os support and stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement?*

Gente, what COVID-19 has made evident to us all is that our children, our grandchildren, our students are not immune to white supremacy, the same state-sanctioned disease of racism that Black people suffer. But we are not here to compare oppressions, only to cite what we share in our common. Our own immigrant communities are disproportionately affected by the virus. There comes a time and place to challenge authority. *And this is the time.* Hasn't it been enough to see our own children in cages, separated from their parents? This alone should be enough proof that the United States does not value us as a people, except when it's time to open the voting booth?

As educators, we open this conversation about anti-Blackness, one which Latina/o communities often do not engage in publicly. Many of us are more vulnerable to racism than others by the color of our skin, our native tongue (whether español o un idioma indígena) and our citizenship status. Whether U.S. born or "legalized" immigrants, we carry with us the unexamined racism from our countries of origin, including the United States. We must unify against this enemy of internalized racism. Few of us are willing to admit that in our investment in becoming/being "American," many of us have turned our backs against the recent waves of immigrants from Central América, the vast majority of whom are Indigenous and Afro-Latina/o. This is what it means to be Raza, to see ourselves reflected in one another. Nuestra comunidad incluye personas Afrodescendientes, asiaticas, mestiza/os, indígenas y blancas.

Our communities are deeply connected by shared histories of oppression, struggle and resistance to white supremacy.

Talk about anti-Blackness with your familias, con los jóvenes, con las tías y los primos, los abuelos y bisabuelos. SOLIDARIDAD. We write to you today to remind you that when we fight for the rights of Black communities, we fight for our own. We need to see ourselves reflected in this movement and stand in solidarity, marching alongside and working with Black communities for social justice. Perhaps then, come November, sharing common cause with Black communities, we could very well form a united voting bloc that removes this Trompo from office. But removing him is not sufficient. We must address the roots that sparked his election and finally bring about systemic change that is long overdue.

UC SANTA BARBARA

In response to these concerns, we, the UCSB Department of Chicana/o Studies commit to being accountable and demonstrating our solidarity by:

- Collaborating more with Black students, staff, faculty, and community-based organizations that are committed to defunding and demilitarizing the police.
- Offering, in collaboration with Las Maestras Center, forums of discussion about the issues raised in this statement: Afro-Latina/o experiences, Indigenous experiences in Latina/o communities, racism in Latina/o communities, Black and Latina/o relations, and a cross-cultural dialogue about Asian American and Latina/o immigrant experiences.
- Offering classes on anti-Black racism in Latina/o communities and working with our colleagues in the Black Studies Department to organize forums on the same topic.

Let us not forget que la lucha sigue. Siempre en SOLIDARIDAD.

We also want to hear from you. What are your questions, concerns? What do you/we need to learn, to say? What do you suggest? Please email us at: LasMaestras@gmail.com or chicfac@chicst.ucsb.edu.