

Statement from the Department of Communication

The Department of Communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara stands in solidarity with all those who speak, write, and express opposition to injustice and oppression, including those currently speaking out against police brutality and institutionalized racism. None of us have been untouched by the insidious nature of historical, institutional racism, especially toward members of the Black community. We are tragically reminded of this by the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade. Centuries of murder and dehumanization of African Americans are being collectively mourned around the country and across the globe. We mourn with you. It is difficult to go on with everyday tasks when there is violence and suffering all around us, especially at a time when we are physically separated by a pandemic.

The members of our Department share a core belief that we can learn to communicate better with one another, and that improved communication can help promote positive change. Now, more than ever, is a time both to listen to one another and work toward improving our communication with one another. Now is a time for actions that clearly and boldly communicate empathy and understanding.

We are committed to looking inward at our own policies, practices, and communication, as well as outward at the ways we can help others benefit from improved communication. Within our department, we know this is a time for change and serious scrutiny of every aspect of how we do our work as educators, scholars, mentors, and colleagues. Put bluntly, we must rethink how we pursue our educational mission. We know we have real work to do, but we are resolved to doing that work to create a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate community.

We believe that communication scholarship and education have vital roles to play in combating institutional racism in all its forms. Toward that end, scholars in our Department study diverse topics central to wide-ranging forms of communication. This includes the media environment, organizational practices, and interpersonal and intergroup relationships. Both in and out of the classroom, then, we can play critical roles educating on topics such as constructive conflict communication, cooperation and organizing, and the countering of disinformation, fake news, and other forms of mediated deception designed to divide us.

Yet, we know that education and expertise are not endpoints, and as such, we must remain steadfastly committed to continual learning and critical self-reflection in order to build a more just society. In collaboration with our sister Departments in the Division of Social Science, we want to help our society understand, and eradicate, the many harms resulting from racist and misogynist institutions and discourses. Many of our current classes and much of our research aims to advance more effective advocacy, promote equity and social change, and address structural and institutional violence embodied in everyday organizational and interpersonal dynamics. We believe, then, that we have a foundation upon which we can build toward a better community and society. We know, however, that we, as a department, can do more. We must.

On behalf of the faculty and staff of the Department of Communication,



Norah E. Dunbar, Department Chair