Statement Against Racism and Police Violence

Grounded in the principles and teachings of the Brazilian educational philosopher Paulo Freire, the Paulo Freire Democratic Project at Chapman University is a group of critical educators, public intellectuals and community activists who work towards attaining a more humane, equitable, and just society through critical educational practices that are anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-gender normative, and anti-capitalist. As such, we vehemently denounce the abuses inherent in the violent policing of the Black community and other communities of color. These practices and those of vigilantes have led to the unjustifiable deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Corey Jones, and many others over the years. As Freire warned, “Engaged in the process of liberation, [we] cannot remain passive in the face of the oppressor’s violence.”

We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist groups who demand that we value the life of every Black person. In recent weeks hundreds of interracial and intergenerational protests have erupted throughout the country and the world in support of the victims of police brutality and their families. The purpose of these protests has been to demand justice and the cessation of police brutality against Black Americans. We are filled with rage and deeply saddened at the continued loss of Black lives. However, we are greatly inspired by the boundless courage of Black people who are, once again, leading the fight for justice in the current global protests. When one candle is lit, there is hope; when many candles are lit, there is promise.

We call for a dismantling of racism and other systems of oppression that dehumanize our communities of color, including the prison industrial complex that serves as an arm of the state to ensure white supremacy and capitalist interests. We argue for community-based, restorative alternatives to the punitive systems of state repression represented by the police. We are in support of holistic social programs aimed at the health, welfare and empowerment of local communities and their development.

James Baldwin once said that, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” We kneel united with our Black brothers and sisters with compassion and we are committed to face those who deprive them of life and liberty with steadfast determination. We refuse to be seduced into piecemeal reform once again or to acquiesce to a gradual decline of tyrannical policing. ¡Basta ya! Enough!

While racism permeates all levels of society, we recognize the roles that class exploitation within capitalist societies play in perpetuating and sustaining racism, police violence, extraordinary levels of poverty, underemployment, and homelessness. These must be attended to through a common ownership of the wealth, goods, services, and economic means of production. In educational institutions, this means organizing around the shared democratic means of socially produced knowledge.

As educators concerned with the lives and welfare of our students, we also call for increased support to schools and teachers. This support includes curricular changes that include critical pedagogy, culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, and ethnic studies, which affirm cultural diversity and funds of knowledge in communities of color. It is with conviction that we prepare educators to do the important work of building respect, understanding, and inclusivity in all young people so that we can live in a world where diversity is celebrated, and social relations are rooted in love and dignity for every human being and all life.

The views expressed here are those of the PFDP members and do not represent those of Chapman University.