History Department Statement on the Death of George Floyd

The history of lynching and other forms of racist violence in the United States of America runs long and deep. As it stares us in the face once again, we stand in solidarity with Black Americans whose existentially dangerous conditions of life have been made so acutely visible by recent events. We rededicate ourselves to a historical understanding of these issues, to undoing the legacies of slavery, and to resisting all forms of institutionalized racism within and outside the university.

Over the last four decades, state education, mental illness treatment, public housing, affordable healthcare, and addiction treatment have all been defunded. Over the same time period, the police have been increasingly militarized and policing in the United States has become more invasive, aggressive and intensive. From the racial disparities in COVID-19 deaths, to homelessness, to police brutality, the worst consequences of these obscene priorities have been visited on the racialized and the marginalized. We can, however, take concrete political action to reverse these developments.

A recent report on local policing found that the San Diego Police Department and the San Diego Sheriff’s Department stop Black people more than twice as often as white people. They are also much more likely to search, arrest and use force when stopping Black citizens. We remember Alfred Olango, the unarmed Black man killed by police in El Cajon in 2016. In light of these sobering facts, we support the ballot measure currently being debated in the City Council to create an independent, community-led Commission on Police Practices.

We support the protests for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and unequivocally condemn the violent policing of demonstrations in La Mesa and Downtown San Diego. The ACLU has made a page listing your rights if you are arrested at a protest. Their local number is 619 232 2121: take this number with you when you go to a demonstration. If you are arrested, call it and leave your name and birthdate and an explanation of what happened. They will pass the information onto the National Lawyers Guild, which has a network of attorneys to assist in mass defense.

At the state level, we believe it is time to change how we fund our communities. For example, the California Legislature just voted affirmatively on Assembly Bill 2054, The Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems, a pilot grant program to organize community-based responses to crises that are currently dealt with by the police, but which should properly be handled within a health or social-work framework. The intent is to provide “young people of color, people with disabilities, people who are gender nonconforming, people who are formerly incarcerated, people with immigration status issues, and people who are unhoused or homeless” with emergency services that are culturally appropriate, from trained professionals with a track record of service in their communities.

Closer to home, we call upon the administration to adopt similar alternatives to the traditional campus police force. We understand that many students, particularly our Black student population, often feel unsafe, targeted, and threatened by campus and local police. This creates a hostile environment that can undermine these students’ academic performance as well as their
mental and emotional well-being. We also demand **more transparency and accountability about current policing on our campuses** and ask that the university divests from the local police. Instead, we ask that the priorities of the university be redirected towards better mental health provision as well as academic and housing support for our students. We once again urge the UCSD administration to renew its commitment to recruit and retain Black faculty and students, and to address the racism and anti-Blackness that continue to blight the lives of so many people on this campus.

As an academic department that serves thousands of undergraduate and graduate students a year, we also accept our own responsibility in creating a more equitable environment for our Black students. We understand that statements of solidarity are useless if they are not backed by action. We therefore pledge to evaluate and implement the methods we can adopt to better support our Black students and to create an environment in which they feel safe, valued, and heard. It is not enough to deplore inequities and injustices that happen elsewhere as if these were distant concerns that do not implicate us. We must act where we are and put our own house in order.

Resources:

Here is the website for the Movement for Black Lives, which is coordinating the protests: https://m4bl.org/

Here are some other organizations to check out / donate to:

- **Black Visions Collective**
- **San Diego Bail Fund**
- **George Floyd Memorial Fund**
- **ACLU of San Diego**
- **Campaign Zero**

If you are a San Diego resident, here are the email addresses at which to contact your representatives about the Commission on Police Practices:

jennifercampbell@sandiego.gov,
barbarabry@sandiego.gov,
christopherward@sandiego.gov,
monicamontgomery@sandiego.gov,
markkersey@sandiego.gov,
ChrisCate@sandiego.gov,
scottsherman@sandiego.gov,
Museums and Research Centers:

- National Museum of African American History and Culture: [https://www.si.edu/unit/african-american-museum](https://www.si.edu/unit/african-american-museum)
- California African American Museum: [https://caamuseum.org/](https://caamuseum.org/)
- National Civil Rights Museum: [https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/](https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/)
- International Civil Rights Center and Museum: [https://www.sitinmovement.org/](https://www.sitinmovement.org/)
- San Diego African American Museum of Fine Arts: [https://www.sdaamfa.org/](https://www.sdaamfa.org/)
- Museum of the African Diaspora: [https://www.moadsf.org/](https://www.moadsf.org/)
- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: [https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg](https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg)

Students in need please contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 858-534-3755 or [https://caps.ucsd.edu](https://caps.ucsd.edu).

Faculty and staff in need can access the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) at 858-534-5523 or [https://blink.ucsd.edu/HR/services/support/counseling/appointment.html](https://blink.ucsd.edu/HR/services/support/counseling/appointment.html).

Give now to support our Black students:

- UC SAN DIEGO UJIMA NETWORK BLACK HISTORY MONTH SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT
- GERARD ALLAN SASEK ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP
- DIVERSITY AWARD FOR UNDERGRADUATES ENDOWMENT
- OFFICE FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INNOVATION FUND
- OFFICE FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STUDENT ACCESS AND SUPPORT
- BLACK ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE
- AFRIKAN BLACK COALITION (ABC) CONFERENCE OUTREACH
- BLACK HISTORY MONTH SCHOLARSHIP BRUNCH
- BLACK RESOURCE CENTER SUPPORT FUND
- UCSD BLACK ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP FUND - ARTS AND HUMANITIES (San Diego Foundation)