

Dear UCI Community,

Like you, we in Graduate Division are dismayed, angered, and saddened by the violence, racism, and intolerance taking place in our communities nationwide. The tragic and unnecessary death of George Floyd, who died in Minneapolis police custody late last week, is the latest in a long series of horrific events that leave communities crying out in pain and longing for justice. Floyd's wrongful death has sparked demonstrations against police brutality and racial discrimination across this country, including areas around the UCI community. The sad reality is, an instance like this is not unique. We need structural, cultural, and societal change.

As many scholars have noted, the United States for all its wonderful features is a country founded on white supremacy. As a child growing up in Georgia surrounded by Confederate monuments and new Jim Crow, I witnessed this firsthand. We have had many moments in our history in which we have said this shall not stand. Let us hope today is finally the day that is true. I long for a time when my Black students will not fear walking to the lab at night, a time when anyone who wants can jog anywhere they want, when a trip to the store to buy Skittles is not a death sentence.

In my home, I have conversations with my young sons about what they can do to keep their friends and others safe as they age. Black parents have long had to talk to their children about how to stay safe in America. It is equally important that white parents talk to our children about not perpetrating violence.

At the university, we have a delicate balance to keep. My voice, as a white tenured professor, gets heard enough. And so I will try to be quiet and listen. At the same time, my voice as a Vice Provost carries some weight, and so I will try to use it to support and protect and lift up our Black students and post-docs. We all have work to do, and I believe our colleagues at UCI are committed to doing that work.

It is not enough to not be racist. We must all strive to be anti-racist. I won't pretend to know what it's like to be Black. With that being said, I do see you, I do hear you, and I want to hear and learn more when you are ready and on your terms. If I, or anyone else in Graduate Division, can be of service, please come talk to us. As always, I can't promise I can give you what you want, but I promise to listen.



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