



June 3, 2020

To the Cal Poly community and beyond:

Three months ago, we wrote a statement at the start of our shelter-at-home to express solidarity with our students of Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) heritage as they navigated through blatant racism, xenophobic actions, and systematic silencing. We said then that we need to acknowledge both where we experience systemic racism *and* where we benefit from privilege. We need now to state support as an APIDA community for our Black students, colleagues, and community.

We are devastated for the family and friends of George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Nina Pop, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Erica Garner, and now also David McAttee, and countless others who have been killed under the hands of the police state: #blacklivesmatter.¹ We mourn how Black people have been turned into trending hashtags. We, as an APIDA community, need to be more actionable in resisting the white oppressive systems we live under. There is no better example of complacency than Tou Thao, who stood in silence as George Floyd was murdered. We condemn this nonaction action that has killed a man. We also condemn the U.S. criminal justice system's clear complicity with white supremacy. On May 29, 2020, Officer Derek Chauvin was charged with third-degree murder, which is defined as killing that is unintentional. The bodily harm that is clearly shown in the video was not unintentional. It was intentional, and it was a clear act of racist violence. Only by public outcry has that charge been upgraded to second-degree, and has Tou Thao, as well as the other two officers, been arrested as of June 3, 2020.

We support those who are fighting for justice and fighting to be heard in Minnesota, and we are dismayed that there is a need for people to put their bodies at risk, as we are still in the midst of a global pandemic. This need represents a deeper cut into the wounds of inequity. The pandemic has already proven to affect Black and Brown people disproportionately.² We denounce the government's sudden militaristic response to "protect" property, when there was so little response to protect lives.

As we are in a Predominantly White Institution, it is more important than ever to acknowledge the immense tragedy that has befallen this country and the state of Minnesota. We have seen the University of Minnesota divest from the police state there, and we applaud this action.³ We call for Cal Poly and Cal Poly Corporation to rethink their ties with police states. We have seen and condemn the brutal force that has been used against, among others, Cal Poly Black students by Cal Poly Police. On June 1, 2020, hundreds of San Luis Obispo community members, including students from Cal Poly and local high schools, marched peacefully to denounce police violence against Black people. They were met with violence from the San Luis Obispo Police Department, the Cal Poly Police Department, and officers called in from police departments across the Central Coast. We condemn this police response for demonstrating a lack of adequate care and for reproducing the militarized violence against which the

¹ This movement was founded by Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors.

² Please follow and support [Data 4 Black Lives](#).

³ See [University of Minnesota Limiting Involvement with Minneapolis Police Department](#).



demonstrators were peacefully protesting. We call for the university to reconsider having Raytheon, a large part of the military industrial complex, as an affiliate on the President's board, and we support the years of students who have called for cutting ties with such a militaristic operation.⁴

We are committed to supporting—financially, politically, and emotionally—Cal Poly organizations that serve our Black community, such as the Black Academic Excellence Center and the Black Faculty and Staff Association. We have individually given to Black mutual aid and bail funds, such as the Black Visions Collective, and we will continue to start conversations and donate money. We encourage our members and communities to continue giving money to Black mutual aid groups.⁵

We, as the steering committee of the Asian Pacific Islander Faculty Staff Association (APIFSA), have a responsibility to honor the yak títu títu yak tilhini Northern Chumash Tribes, upon whose homelands the institution of Cal Poly stands, by working against these systems of capitalism, colonization, and the continual erasure of Indigenous communities that allow many of us to live and work in this place in the modern day. As we continue on the road of virtual teaching, we need to further acknowledge the material conditions we depend on that are born from and reproduce inequity; for example, we recognize that we further add to systems of capitalism and environmental injustice by using high-speed Internet and related hardware to conduct university-related business.⁶ We also acknowledge our privilege of having the time, space, and freedom of speech to bring this letter forward as Asian Americans in academia.

This past month, we have come together numerous times as a group to celebrate APIDA Heritage Month, to hear the State of APIDA, to discuss *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*, and to engage in dialogue on social media (@calpolyapida). We have started conversations but we have to do more by refusing to stand silent and continuously reassessing our own selves and our own identities. We will continue to address the anti-Blackness and clear grasping and desire for proximity to Whiteness within our own communities. We support and give strength to the students, staff, faculty, and community members who are experiencing such grief on a daily basis in this time of crisis, and we welcome supporters who also strive to work against racist practices and systems.

Please see below for suggested resources and ways to help.

Signed,
The APIFSA Steering Committee Members:

Roberta Wolfson
Nisa Morey
Jaime Ding
Olivia Tran

⁴ For more information, see "[Cal Poly SLO Attacking Free Speech, Raytheon Protesters Say.](#)"

⁵ See this [list of mutual aid funds](#).

⁶ See [Towards a Critical Black Digital Humanities](#) by Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble.



Lilianne Tang
Lisa Kawamura
Grace Yeh
Donna Massicotte
Joy Pedersen
Kristina Wong
Nadine Spingola-Hutton

Action items to Demonstrate Local Community Support:

- Take any of the actions suggested by the Central Coast Coalition for Undocumented Student Success in their [recent letter](#).
- Support Black businesses in SLO, e.g. Miss Oddettes, Twisted and Glazed, Avery Acupuncture, A Satellite of Love, and [more](#).
- Take political action to demilitarize the police. For example, pay attention to local and state budgets that fund the growth of police departments, and push for the defunding of militarized police equipment. (See [“Lawmakers Begin Bipartisan Push to Cut Off Police Access to Military-Style Gear.”](#))

Action items for APIDAs To Practice Allyship:

- Self and Community Work:
 - Talk to family and friends about white supremacy and Asian complicity with anti-Blackness.
 - Understand the history of social movements and “riots” in the United States ([“Riots are the American Way”](#)).
 - Acknowledge that the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened the door for large-scale immigration that created many APIDA communities in the US, was won through the fight for civil rights ([“How the Civil Rights Movement Opened the Door to Immigrants of Color”](#)).
 - Know your rights when you show up to demonstrations, and make it your priority to protect and take direction from Black organizers on the scene ([“Know Your Protesters’ Rights”](#)).
 - Take Professor Keene’s self-guided online course offered through Brown University, [“Intro to Critical Race Theory.”](#)
 - Engage in open dialogue with family and friends who do not understand the protests. Here are some possible resources to help guide your discussions:
 - [Letters for Black Lives](#)
 - [Confronting Anti-Blackness in South Asian Homes](#) (This workshop guide is geared towards South Asians, but is still applicable to other Asians.)
 - Help translate [Letters for Black Lives for the 2020 update](#).
 - Self-educate. Here are some books you can read to learn about the racial history of police violence and the prison industrial complex:



- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*
- Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete*
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*
- Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*
- Katherine Franke, *Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition*
- Brett Story, *Prison Land: Mapping Carceral Power Across Neoliberal America*⁷
- Tangible Support:
 - Donate to Black-led initiatives, such as:
 - [SNaPCo](#)
 - [LGBTQ+ Freedom Fund](#)
 - [Trans Justice Funding Project](#)
 - Support Black student organizations on Cal Poly campus through collaborating with them, co-sponsoring their events, or donating funds:
 - [Black Student Union](#)
 - Black Academic Excellence Center ([website](#); [link to donate](#))
 - [Cal Poly's Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers](#)
- Resource Compilations to Support the Movement for Black Lives (in Multiple Languages):
 - [English](#)
 - [Chinese](#)
 - [Korean](#)
 - [Japanese](#)
 - [Thai](#)
 - [Malay](#)
 - [Indonesian](#)
 - [Hindi](#)

⁷ Thank you to Professor Thanayi Jackson for supplying this booklist during the Cal Poly History Department's "Zoom-in on Protests and Police Violence in a Historical Context" on June 3, 2020.