

Communication Studies Program Statement in Support of Black Lives

"Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on." - Thurgood Marshall

"I for one believe that if you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program, and when the people create a program, you get action." — Malcolm X

The faculty of Stockton University's Communication Studies Program are saddened and outraged by the recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade. We stand in solidarity with peaceful protestors, activists, and socially conscious citizens across the United States calling for an end to state-sanctioned violence against Black lives and Black bodies. We stand in solidarity with our student and community leaders and activists working to bring about these changes.

As the National Communication Association solidarity statement says, "Communication is central to how we are learning about these events as well as how to help heal our society." Now more than ever, society needs communication experts to "...chip away at institutional racism. ... To educate people... and to help people understand the history and present of white supremacist practices, institutions, and discourses." In this moment, we are uniquely situated to understand the media landscape, and to help develop effective message strategies in the fight against racism. We are also called to use our critical understanding of media messages to interrogate what we see/read/hear, and to spread media literacy. We have the ability to talk to our friends/families about news biases, the way news stories are "framed," and the extent to which both the demand/restraints of a given medium and the political/financial interests of a given media outlet (ownership effects & advertising dollars) influence the way a story is told.

We recognize that everyone has a role to play in dismantling the pervasive structural and institutional racism that normalizes violence against Black people in this country. As individuals, we pledge to reflect on our own privileges and biases, and the ways they are rooted in a history of white supremacy. As a program, we pledge to consciously amplify Black voices by incorporating more materials from BIPOCⁱ scholars, directors, content creators, and professionals into our courses and co-curricular programming. We also pledge to advocate for the immediate hiring of more BIPOC faculty within the COMM program, and to actively listen to and support our students of color. We may not always get this right, but we are committed to doing better. We invite our BIPOC students and colleagues to both assist us in furthering our efforts and to hold us accountable when we fall short.

Finally, we call upon Stockton University to support students, staff, faculty, and community members, *in concrete ways*, as we work to confront the history and contemporary manifestations of racism and state violence in our community and across the country.

Specifically, we join the School of Arts & Humanities in proposing that Stockton establish a **Center for the Study and Prevention of Racial Injustice.**ⁱⁱ

Ending systemic racism is everyone's responsibility. Let us move forward together with respect, in solidarity, and with an unwavering commitment to dismantling the insidious culture of white supremacy.

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

ⁱ BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. For more information, see <https://www.thebipocproject.org/>

ⁱⁱ The Communication Studies Program echoes the School of Arts & Humanities in proposing that Stockton establish a Center for the Study and Prevention of Racial Injustice, in order to:

- Establish the critical role of Africana Studies in educating the campus community about issues specific to people of African descent, and assisting in best practices pedagogy on racial justice;
- Provide an evidence-based teaching, learning, research, and outreach center to promote the study of racial injustice, and develop strategies for its prevention;
- Incorporate courses, experiential learning, and activism against racial injustice and for diversity, equity, and social justice;
- Provide a common maker-and-presentation space for research and creative expression on themes appropriate to the Center's mission;
- Partner with ARHU, SOBL, GENS, and other engaged faculty, as well as appropriate campus initiatives, such as the Holocaust Resource Center and the Hughes Center for Public Policy;
- Partner with other Stockton offices, faculty, staff, and student groups to study and prevent racial and other social injustice within the Stockton community;
- Partner with outreach opportunities like *Why the Humanities Matter* to study and prevent racial and other social injustice in the broader South Jersey community;
- Seek to promote Stockton as a regional and national leader in the study and prevention of racial injustice.