

From: [Henry Shannon](#)
To: [Faculty](#); [Staff](#); [Adjunct Faculty](#); [Chaffeyans](#)
Subject: Statement on the Need for Justice and Reflection
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Dear Campus Community:

It is not easy to find words. We are in the midst of history repeating itself before our very eyes. Since the beginning of the year, we are once again experiencing what our society endured with the 1918 Spanish Flu, the 1929 Great Depression, the 1968 Civil Rights era and the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Take that in for a moment, and join with me to evaluate such loss. More than 100,000 American lives lost to COVID-19, and more than 40 million people are without jobs as a result. Hundreds of thousands of us have stayed in our homes anxiously for the past several weeks as a result of the Governor's "stay-at-home" order. Then came the news of the recent series of murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Arbery was jogging two miles from his home in Georgia, when he was chased and lynched by two white males and killed. Taylor was killed while asleep in her home when Louisville Police raided the wrong house. Floyd died in the street, not being able to breathe under the knee of a Minnesota police officer.

Perhaps for many, that was the boiling point. The uncertainty of the pandemic and economic crisis was almost overshadowed by people, who were tired of being treated as less than on account of their race, or those tired of seeing it happen time and time again. I know first-hand that frustration and sadness. I know what it feels like to be seen as less, to grow up in the segregated south. I know what it is like to be pulled over and have my car searched, for no reason other than driving while black. My heart sometimes, in my throat, remembering the talks I had with my own children on how to "behave" when having an encounter with law enforcement. I have had experiences like that as a child, a young man, a husband, a father and even recently, as a grandfather.

I share my personal experiences for anyone who needs to know they are not alone. I see you, and I know what is like. That is not to say that in my lifetime I have not seen wonderful moments of progress and people coming together for the common good of all. Believe me, I have. Most recently, I saw it over the weekend, as generations of people protested peacefully over the need to change police practices and the criminal justice system overall. Sadly, a small number of people used the protests as opportunities to steal and resort to violence. Some people even instigate chaos to discredit the real reason behind why people are there. I believe there is no excuse for any of this behavior if we are looking for positive change.

At Chaffey College, we want all of our students, faculty and staff to thrive. It is within our campus community that we will build the leaders of tomorrow. Know that the Chaffey Family is one that is inclusive of all, and we will get through this together. Our commitment to diversity and equity will remain at the forefront of what we do not only today, but as we move toward the future. I encourage you to stand with me as we build a community where we honor all people, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, ability or, creed.

To help us lean on one another during these difficult times,

- Chaffey College's Center for Culture and Social Justice will hold a series of Zoom meetings to discuss national topics and discussions about prejudice and inequality as well as incorporate mental health counselors as needed.
- We will plan an event in the near future that will provide a safe space for our campus community to have a dialogue and heal.
- We will re-evaluate the President's Equity Council's purpose and work to align its mission to proactively address issues such as this.
- We will further expand cultural-sensitivity and awareness training opportunities/professional development for our faculty and staff.
- We will continue to actively implement best-practice programs, policies and training that promote social justice.

The world has been difficult over the last few months, but you are not alone. At Chaffey College, when one of us is hurting, we are all hurting. My hope is that we will all actively engage to build viable and ongoing solutions for a better future. It is only by working together that we can turn this boiling point to a turning point for a better tomorrow for all.

Thank you,

Henry D. Shannon, Ph.D.
Superintendent/President

