

Dear community:

CSUCI's Chemistry Department recognizes the reality of systemic, institutional racism. The members of the Chemistry Department oppose racism in all its forms. Police violence targeting people of color is one symptom of society's unwillingness to address institutional racism.

Racism is not merely the conscious action by individuals against others based on race. Institutional racism is a *structure inside which we all live*. That structure has been created to support the interests of one group of people, and the Chemistry Department is not a neutral party; we stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter in opposition to institutional racism.

13% of Americans are black, yet 34% of men in American prisons are black and, in California, black people are at least 2.6 times as likely to be killed by police as white people.* And while Latinx Americans are 14% of the population, they account for 30% of arrests. (1-4)

The inequities that drive these statistics intersect with our own University, where we see our Latinx students' success trailing whites'. Academia is not ignoring this. We speak of closing equity gaps and of creating opportunities. Faculty often ask "How should we address racism in our classes and teaching?" or "How can we create the conditions for student success?" These are the tools academics turn to when we try to fix problems; the Chemistry Department asks: "Is that enough?"

STEM education is just as culpable in acting out institutional racism as any other entity. CSUCI's Chemistry Department cannot be silent, and will do more. We don't just educate, we are ourselves learners. We are open to learning from our students and community about their needs and goals and how we can address them. But we are not passive learners: we look inward to see where our problems lie, and we reach outward to learn how to be a better part of our community, to serve it better.

Your Chemistry department is taking the following actions:

- opening of a student-faculty discussion on institutional racism and change in STEM, where the Chemistry community can share our experience and ideas on how your Department can act to combat systematized racism;
- creation of an advisory board consisting of community members, students, and their families to help us understand how our curriculum might better connect to the people of Ventura County and California;
- increasing the inclusion in our curriculum of the history and current expression of institutional racism, and creation of learning experiences that are conducive to inclusion and equity;

- expansion and improvement of teaching practices that value student and community voices and experiences; and
- creating opportunities for faculty to participate in implicit bias training aimed at STEM teaching.

Please join us as we join the movement for social change!

Sincerely,

Blake Gillespie
 Brittnee Veldman
 Mojgan Roushan
 Benny Ng
 Nancy Deans
 William Munroe
 Hillary Tejada
 Safa Khan
 Phil Hampton
 Michael Burnside
 Mary Woo
 Ahmed Awad

1) <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219> (Links to an external site.)

2) <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/nationaltrends> (Links to an external site.)

*Since there is no formal collection, aggregation, or dissemination of data on police violence and homicide, demographic information on deaths of POC in police custody is difficult to assess. It is believed that the reported statistic is a significant *underreporting* of the real numbers.

The disproportion rate between demographic size and number of killings is a better measure of the magnitude of the bias. See [here](#) (Links to an external site.) for an illustration of the state-by-state disproportion between populations and killings.

3) <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/> (Links to an external site.)
<https://latino.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CJ-Report-10.8.1812.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

4) <https://latino.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CJ-Report-10.8.1812.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

More resources

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/09/873375416/there-is-no-neutral-nice-white-people-can-still-be-complicit-in-a-racist-society> (Links to an external site.)

1. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*
2. James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*
3. Ibram Kendi's *How to be an Anti-Racist*

4. Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*

