

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

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To all LA+ED students, alumni and supporters:

We write to join the Black community in mourning the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Stephon Clark, and so many other Black individuals at the hands of police throughout our country. This is a painful time as memories of past violence and oppression arise, but also a hopeful time as many people are recognizing this pain. We stand in solidarity with the protesters and others committed to anti-racism. We believe that BLACK LIVES MATTER.

Our students are more diverse than the professions they will soon join. We are proud of this fact, and it will no doubt have a positive impact and shape the fields of landscape architecture, planning and environmental design for the better. These professions have a unique responsibility to create places that meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of diverse populations. However, our society, our economy, and our politics are built upon a foundation of racism. This will be difficult to extract, but it is necessary. A first step is to acknowledge the injustices that shape the Black experience, and also to admit that we, as individuals and as professions, have been complicit in these injustices.

Our program is not excused from this responsibility. WE MUST DO BETTER, especially when it comes to our connections with Black communities. We have not done all that we can to recruit, support, and recognize the achievements of our Black students. In addition, while some attempts have been made to address shortcomings in our curriculum, we need to conduct a thorough examination of all our courses and identify how they can better present diverse viewpoints and move away from outmoded and racist ideologies. Along with being intentional about making social factors and environmental justice an instrumental part of our curriculum, we must seek ways to emphasize mutually beneficial community engagement in our courses, and to explicitly address systemic racism.

We acknowledge these immediate changes are not enough and that this will be a long-term effort. We are, and will always be open to advice and opportunities to help us in this pursuit. In the next year, we commit to examining ways to reduce bias in our classrooms and our program culture, to engage our students in ways that are more inclusive, and to eliminate institutional barriers for Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and Immigrants. We invite all of you to join us in this effort. In the coming month, we will send a follow-up email outlining our next steps. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to send a note to David de la Peña, Program Director.

Additionally, if you would like to read more about national responses to address justice issues for Black Lives, you may find the following articles useful:

<http://groundupjournal.org/blacklandscapesmatter>

<https://colloqate.org/design-justice-for-black-lives>

<http://www.stateofplace.co/our-blog/2020/6/and-before-that>

Sincerely,

David de la Peña, Patsy Owens, Claire Napawan, Emily Schlickman, Michael Rios, Elizabeth Boults, Sharla Cheney, Stephen Wheeler, Meg Lidd, Cory Parker, Deni Ruggeri, Haven Kiers, Sahoko Yui, Brett Milligan, Steven Greco