



Cleveland State University

engaged learning

College of Education and Human Services
Office of the Dean

Statement from Dean Zachariah:

In the recent past we witnessed the killing of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. More recently, we witnessed the horrific murder of George Floyd. We also witnessed a recording of an episode in Central Park of a white woman making a call to a police dispatcher on Christian Cooper. These events are not innocent nor benign nor divorced from racialized historical context and have caused significant civil unrest in the country and much turmoil in the minds of the average citizen. Each of us has been impacted differently and has likely reacted differently to these specific events and the protests that have followed.

There is ample evidence of systemic racism in multiple facets of our daily life. We see it in the racial disparity in prior health conditions that exist in the United States, illuminated currently by the disproportionate number of African-Americans impacted by COVID 19. We live in a country where race and ethnicity often intersect with wealth and class. The pandemic has exposed economic inequalities that will likely be exacerbated in a post pandemic society. Historical context and the data unveil racial discrepancies in all corners of the criminal justice system. Of course, the roots of institutional racism permeate our educational system dating back to the landmark case of *Brown v. Board 1954* that need to be disrupted and dismantled. This has got to change, and we need to do our part.

As a college community we need to establish our commitment to urban education and human service disciplines. Our faculty leaders have spearheaded some of this work by drafting [justice-oriented statements](#) in support of our students, faculty and staff. The Deans Office will establish a structure to chronicle justice initiatives. We ask that you join us in facilitating change and working toward an equitable and justice-centered future. Among other efforts, we will:

- Provide ample space for dialogue to occur about justice related topics among our faculty and staff
- Examine our data on our student retention, our admission data in all of our programs, data on our internships and student teaching, and finally data on our petitions
- Evaluate our policies through an equity lens and intervene as needed
- Provide our graduates the opportunity to have conversations about racism in all its manifestations
- Scrutinize our curriculum, redoubling our efforts to promote social justice and equity programming to better support the development of prospective leaders in urban education and human service disciplines
- [Assemble and centralize resources](#) that will benefit our entire community
- Collaborate with the Dean's Diversity Committee on justice-based professional development opportunities

Let's leverage this time and use this as an opportunity to grow as a college, and to be there to support each other. Like Dr. Banks suggested at our faculty meeting last week, let's reach out to

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each of our black faculty and staff colleagues and make sure they know that we will all jointly lead in our efforts to take action. We will be the better for embarking on this work together.