

Where Do We Go From Here?

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To: Merritt-FAS <Merritt-FAS@peralta.edu>

To My Merritt College Family:

The other night my six-year-old twins (with toys in their hands) came into my room and asked me the following question: “Daddy, why does that policeman have his knee on the other man’s neck?” They had seen bits and pieces of the news over the past few days and wanted me to help them make sense of the senseless. As I write this message to you, I feel much the same way as I did with them—struggling to ascribe appropriate meaning to this most recent blow (there are other galling incidents as well) against our common humanity. And I do so as parts of our city—and many others across the country—roil in a state of upheaval.

I know that we are all dealing with this trauma in different ways. Some of you are grieving, while others are still reeling from watching the life being choked out of George Floyd. And I know that some of you are simply seething. In the media we see people displaying a range of emotions as well. Some are praying for strength and understanding. Some are marching, chanting, and protesting in the streets. And some are engaging in vandalism, theft, and arson. Certainly, our willingness to valorize or vilify these reactions depends largely upon our own sensibilities and lived experiences. But what I also hope is that most of us feel compelled to do *something* in response to what is happening.

I will readily admit that I do not have all of the answers, but I remain committed to bringing us together and working on solutions collectively. I believe that we need a space to dialogue and heal as a community, so I am working with the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellors, and the other college presidents to create a venue for us to do that across the District. At Merritt College, I ask for your partnership in helping to brainstorm constructive ways for us to support our students and engage the community we serve. I understand that the semester has ended and many of our faculty members are away, but if any of you are interested in doing virtual “teach-ins” for students and community members we can certainly facilitate that for you. Availing ourselves of your expertise in such disciplines as sociology, political science, psychology, counseling, African American Studies, and administration of justice would be very helpful. I also realize that we have other faculty members, administrators, and classified professional staff members with extensive experience in community organizing, social justice, and legal affairs, so bringing your talents to bear is vital as well. Finally, I want to encourage each of you to utilize the District’s Employee Assistance Program resources should you feel the need to address issues related to wellness.

In closing, I urge you to take care of yourselves, your families, your communities, and each other during these difficult times, and do not hesitate to let me know if you need anything.

Always,

David

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Collegiality, Communication, Community