



CCA Letter of Solidarity Regarding Current Events

1 message

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Bcc: [REDACTED]

On the morning of Friday, December 5, 2014, the California College of the Arts (CCA) Provost Office released a statement in response to the events and subsequent protests in Ferguson, New York, and other cities. However, we would like to expand on these events through a lens of power and oppression. We believe that an understanding of the relationship between power and oppression is integral to academic excellence and the ability to "[prepare students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility](#)"

A grand jury in New York made the decision not to indict an officer for the [choking death of Eric Garner](#). This decision followed closely behind the non-indictment of the [shooting death of Michael Brown](#) in Ferguson, MO. [These decisions have come amongst the deaths of John Crawford, and Tamir Rice, a black man and 12-year-old black youth both killed by white police officers. These decisions have come on the heels of a series of dropped charges and mistrials regarding the murder of 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones by a police officer.](#) This story plays on consistent loop in the United States: [every 28 hours, the police, security forces, or vigilantes execute a black person](#). In addition to the very few stories the media has covered, it is necessary to point out that womyn of color, queer people of color, trans people of color, and anyone who holds an amalgamation of those identities [are disproportionately affected by police brutality and negligence](#). The prison industrial complex and the school to prison pipeline are the other arms of the United States "injustice" system.

Faculty, Staff, Students, and Alumni at CCA stand in solidarity with the individuals mentioned above and their families, friends, and communities, both locally, and globally. We stand in solidarity with communities working to address various forms of racism in our society and with those working to undo all forms of systematic, structural violence. We stand in solidarity with those in the streets who are angry; we do not seek to advise on the best or most proper way to respond to demoralizing, traumatic, current events. Amongst our CCA community are some of the individuals and communities we stand in solidarity with. Collectively, we are mourning, processing, dialoguing, and, in each of these ways and more, we are fighting back.

California College of the Arts and the broader higher education community must understand that our work--both administrative and creative--does not exist inside of a vacuum, immune from the effects of systematic racism. From police brutality against communities of color to the microaggressions our students, staff, and faculty experience on a daily basis, racist acts are intrinsically connected. Without that understanding, "make art that matters" is merely an empty slogan.

In the response, it is written: "But I remain hopeful in *our* ability as creative practitioners to make a positive social impact in the world, and I have been inspired by our community's actions thus far". We appreciate the highlighting of individual and group led work over the last two weeks in the absence of an institutional response, which included "faculty-led discussions in classes, student-organized meetings, and Res-Life forums". However, there is much more that can be done. Much has been written about [the role of white allies](#) during these times and while we are not all white allies, we all experience power and privilege if we exist as CCA trustees, administrators, staff, and/or faculty.

We are writing this letter, because as members of the CCA community, we feel a responsibility to push the college further and to help create progress that embodies the needs of those most marginalized here. We also know that without specific goals, it becomes difficult to measure progress.

With that in mind, we invite answers to the following questions:

- How is CCA actively standing in solidarity with black communities?
- How is CCA centering the experiences of people of color, instead of invoking the rhetoric of colorblindness or prioritizing the perspectives and comfort of white people?
- What progress has been made in meeting the college's [Diversity Goals](#)?
- What college-wide initiatives will be enacted to ensure "[access and opportunities for all people, with special attention to supporting groups historically underrepresented in higher education](#)"?

With special attention to the fourth question, it is absolutely imperative that the following be a part of the answer:

- **Campus Climate**
 - An office and/or staff position dedicated to College-Wide Diversity/Social Justice initiatives
 - Anti-racism/Racial Sensitivity Trainings for security personnel, faculty, staff, students, etc. required every two years

- CCA-sponsored Staff/Faculty attendance to Liberation-based Professional Development Opportunities
 - Some examples include: the Racial Justice Leadership Institute from Race Forward, & National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education.
- Increased presence and visibility of staff and faculty of color
- Increased Administrative support for the following groups and any events they organize:
 - Faculty of Color Research Alliance
 - Staff of Color Alliance
 - Students of Color Coalition
 - An Alumni of Color Group
- The implementation of an annual campus climate survey to ascertain students' experiences within their classrooms, residence halls, and general student life, through the lens of inclusivity, power, and oppression.
 - Survey responses will serve as a valuable resource for the CCA administration to take the necessary steps to ensure a safe environment for students from diverse backgrounds.
 - Results of the survey will be made public to the university community.
 - A number of universities dedicated to creating and maintaining a respectful, responsible, and accountable campus environment utilizing this method include:
 - University of California system, Rutgers University, University of Wisconsin, University of Vermont, and others.
- **Curriculum**
 - A required Diversity Studies Course within the First Year Core
 - Curriculum more varied in its' representation of artists of color, womyn artists, and queer artists
- **Enrollment**
 - Increased resources for undocumented CCA applicants and students
 - Increased enrollment of Students of Color
 - An increase in enrollment of Black and Latin@ students to better reflect Oakland & San Francisco demographics.
 - This will be accomplished through active recruitment and outreach in Oakland & San Francisco Public schools with large populations of students of color.
 - An increase in enrollment of Native and indigenous students.
 - This will be accomplished through active recruitment of graduating high school Native students on California-based reservations.
 - An increase in enrollment of underrepresented Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and underrepresented Asian students.
 - Disaggregation of international Asian students and domestic Asian American and Pacific Islander students from student demographic statistics to better ascertain issues of under-representation within the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

Our suggestion is that, in order to hold the college accountable, a coalition is created between the President's Diversity Steering Group, Faculty of Color Research Alliance, Staff of Color Alliance, Students of Color Coalition, and Alumni of Color Group to ensure that the aforementioned goals are met. While we believe that it is of utmost importance to focus on the needs of students of color and especially black students right now, we believe that the goals listed in this letter lay a foundation for and bring to light the need for greater support systems for students across all marginalized identities at CCA.

We welcome opportunities for further dialogue amongst CCA Community members and look forward to substantive progress toward the goals of diversity CCA already has in place. After all, as many of us know, we must be the change we wish to see in the world. That change starts right here on the campus of California College of the Arts.

In solidarity,

Misha Abbas, Student
 John Anderson, Alum
 Amy Balkin, Faculty Member
 Alicia Bell, Staff Member
 Michelle Black, Student
 Jessica Bogac-Moore, Student
 Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo, Student
 Natalie Catusus, Alum
 Grace Chen, Student
 KaYan Cheung, Student
 Courtney Chung, Staff Member
 Gema Corrales, Student
 Melinda de Jesus, Faculty Member
 Kevin Demery, Alum

Jo-Ann Maggiora Donovan, Faculty Member
Joann Magali Carrizales Duarte, Student
Astrid Ek, Staff Member
Lauren Elder, Faculty Member
Kaylani Fuller, Student
Aaron Gach, Faculty Member
Aiden Gleisberg, Faculty Member
Joseph Hewitt, Student
Masami Inoue, Student
Alex Lannon, Staff Member
Jessica Lawless, Community Member
Peg Leary, Staff Member
Bo Leungsurawat, Student
Caroline McKown, Student
Charnell McQueen, Student
Marissa Medina, Student
Claudia Molina, Student
Rosa Novak, Student
Zach Ozma, Student
Edgar Purviance, Student
Michaela Realiza, Student
Dorothy Santos, Alum
Jove Smith, Student
Diana Stapleton, Alum
Anton Stuebner, Alum
Zoe Tuck, Student
Caroline Weaver, Student
Nicole Whitner, Staff Member