



STATEMENT OF DEAN LEONARD AND CAMPBELL LAW FACULTY

Anger. Pain. Confusion. Outrage. We all are experiencing some combination of these feelings as we endure the reality of yet another unarmed black man killed in police custody. For far too many among us, there are also feelings of hopeless déjà vu. Why again? When will this stop? Will this ever stop? And for so many in our community, the dominant feeling is fear. Not an abstract fear for our world. A genuine, personal fear that they, or their sister, or their father will be next. The kind of fear that has attended the African American experience for 400 years.

As educators at Campbell Law School, we strive to teach our students to love the law and to promote justice through the law for the betterment of society. We are heartsick that officers sworn to uphold the law and protect their community's citizens would so callously and brazenly take the life of one of those citizens. We also are not naïve enough to think that race played no part. We stand with everyone who demands justice for the murder of George Floyd.

We also stand with the peaceful protestors across the world who are angry and tired and unwilling to wait patiently for reforms that seem never to come. This nation's crowning achievement is the robust protection of one's right to be heard, to peaceably assemble and protest the actions of those in power. It is only fitting that this right be exercised to protest America's long-standing and enduring sin of racial apartheid.

This is the thing about justice. For the law to promote justice, it must be administered equitably and fairly. We must hold all persons accountable who use violent ends to unlawfully harm others. We cannot single out for disproportionate sanction one segment of our population and allow those who enforce the law to escape the same fate. We recognize the incredibly difficult, stressful, and often heroic work of our nation's law enforcement officers. But we must do a better job to hold accountable officers who employ excessive force against their citizens, especially for discriminatory ends.

Lastly, there are many among us who realize we have the privilege of learning about racism rather than living it. We can never fully comprehend the anguish, outrage, and fear our black brothers and sisters experience this day and every day.

But we want to be clear: Black Lives Matter to us. And what we can do in our roles is highlight, educate, and listen. To that end, let us remember that 99 years ago yesterday looting and violence of a very different sort rocked this nation. During the Tulsa Race Massacre, white citizens of that town systematically burned to the ground over 1,200 buildings in the segregated African American part of town, leaving over 300 black men and women, boys and girls, dead. For decades, our textbooks ignored this stain on our history. Only in the year 2000 did it first appear anywhere in Oklahoma's public school curriculum.

Failing to acknowledge and repair from these events only deepens this nation's scars. Let us use this opportunity to speak truth to our reality. To speak up for solutions. To speak, to each other. Let us use our immense talents to try to find solutions, and justice, together.

While this statement is made collectively, these issues involve many dimensions and complexities. Our individual professors bring a range of expertise and personal experience, and I have invited them to amplify their perspectives as they see fit, either in writing or in a public dialogue.