

December 17, 2014

We the undersigned Faculty and Staff of the California State University, Northridge Department of Social Work share in the public outrage and frustration resulting from the:

- St. Louis County grand jury's failure to indict officer Darren Wilson, who killed Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old African American man
- Staten Island grand jury's failure to indict officer Daniel Pantaleo, who was captured on video choking and killing Eric Garner, an unarmed 42-year-old African American man

We stand in solidarity with the many communities, families, and individuals who are:

- Victims of interlocking forms of oppression including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism
- Targets and casualties of state sanctioned violence, harassment, and aggression
- Disproportionately and illegally surveilled
- Unjustly profiled and targeted due to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and age
- Systematically dehumanized by an unforgiving and unfair legal system that continues to penalize long after one has been released from prison
- Members of indigenous communities who are misunderstood, put aside and forgotten
- Stigmatized and devalued for their mental health, housing, medical or other needs

We acknowledge that the above-mentioned cases illustrate the evolution of our legal institutions to uphold racial, gender, class, and sexual orientation hierarchies. We recognize that our legal system was designed within the context of settler colonialism; that it continues to disempower, segregate, and eradicate specific communities and people, while retaining privilege for white, middle class, heteronormative, Christian families. This is evidenced by the epidemics of mass incarceration and deportation; the overrepresentation of youth of color and LGBTQ youth within child welfare and juvenile justice systems; disparate health outcomes and accessibility to healthcare; Stop and Frisk and other policing tactics used to intimidate and harass; racial and religious profiling at borders and within communities of color; murder of transgender people, especially those of color; heightened rates of sexual assault and racialized forms of sexual harassment perpetrated against women of color; normalization of militarized police forces specifically in the lowest income neighborhoods; and failure to indict police officers who are captured on video killing unarmed persons.

We see it as our responsibility as social workers to understand and consider that these histories of racism and genocide constitute an experience of historical trauma that shapes and informs the lives of communities we work most closely with. Additionally, we understand that community wellness, resilience, empowerment, and healing must be understood within this context.

We know that our past collective silence and failure to take action following other acts of state sanctioned violence implies complicity. This letter is a commitment by our Department to humbly follow the lead and efforts of the courageous leaders, activists, communities, and organizations that have been at the forefront of these struggles for so many years. We seek to join these efforts to dismantle the structures of racism, educate for activism, and agitate for justice.

As social workers, social work educators and researchers, we have a responsibility to speak up, act, and inspire our students to do the same. Our aim then is to show a commitment to radical change within the legal system through the following actions:

- Join in solidarity and action with organizations and institutions that support transformative justice, seek peace and uphold non-violence
- Make visible and be accountable to the many privileges of our faculty and staff
- Enhance our curriculum to more consistently and comprehensively address and teach about solutions to settler colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and the resulting forms of oppression, privilege and power
- Initiate course curriculum that addresses social movements and community organizing
- Collaborate and organize with organizations and Departments on and off campus to mobilize action to interrupt the logic of settler colonialism and prevent violence within our communities

**Members of the Faculty and Staff of the California State University, Northridge
Department of Social Work:**

Mark Abelson
Patricia Alba
Wendy Ashley
Eli Bartle
Michele Bartlett
Jodi Brown
Marlene Cardozo
Marjorie Chase
Naomi Chavez

Luis Curiel
Jim Decker
Julie Gould
Beth Halaas
Jennifer Henningfield
Noah Kaplan
Leticia Lara
Amy Levin
Allen Lipscomb

Susan Love
Katie Mortimer
Sarah Mountz
Rachel A-W Navarro
José Paez
Hyun-Sun Park
Gretchen Serrano
Steven Sherry
Victoria Terrill