



A Call to Justice by the Santa Clara County La Raza Lawyers Association

The events since the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, are a poignant reminder of the stain that systemic racism continues to leave on America. As lawyers and officers of the court, we take an oath to uphold the law and do justice. Times such as these test our commitment to that oath and the very ideals which underlie it, but they also provide an opportunity for change and inspired action. We urge our community to derive such positive inspiration to act in solidarity.

Santa Clara County La Raza Lawyers Association condemns the despicable conduct of Officer Derek Chauvin and his three partners. Police brutality is always wrong, but it is especially odious as a means of dehumanizing persons based upon race or ethnicity. Our condemnation, however, is not enough. As we have learned from Dolores Huerta, "Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world." We therefore call upon the community to stand with us and take action to ensure justice.

Despite historic moments of progress, our society has never fully confronted its original sin of racism. The public outrage unfolding in the wake of Mr. Floyd's death is not a reaction to a single isolated incident; rather, it is a desperate plea for equal justice and dignity under the law. It is an eruption of the pain caused by systemic and systematic racism. As lawyers and advocates for an underrepresented community, we know all too well that racism is not just a white hood, a slogan, or a symbol. It is the disparities of the American experience. It is the ability for white men to storm a state capitol building armed with semi-automatic weapons with neither interference nor scrutiny, while those who peacefully protest the police killing of a black man are demonized as un-patriotic "thugs" and arrested. It is the ability to appropriate Latino culture while you simultaneously detain their children in squalor and demand that Latinos "go home" to the other side of a border wall.

The stain of racism and its effects are everywhere around us, including in the legal community. The lack of diversity within the legal profession, especially among the ranks of law firm partners and associates, tenured law professors, judicial clerks, elected officials, corporate counsel, prosecutors, and judges, are simply a few examples. This, of course, is due to underrepresentation in law schools, and the disproportionate effects of the bar exam and other standardized tests, which themselves were deliberately erected as barriers to educational institutions that also all too often fail communities of color. But these conditions are not permanent.

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez tells us that, "Change takes courage." Santa Clara County La Raza Lawyers Association has the courage to commit to change because the status quo lacks justice. We stand ready to develop justice-informed use-of-force policies, to address over-policing in communities of color, to encourage and expand voter registration and turnout, and to critically examine and change the institutions in our society that do not serve the needs of all people.

Words may uplift us, but only action will safeguard our future. We stand in unity with those who practice civil disobedience and struggle for justice. We urge those who engage in violent protest because they are aggrieved and exasperated to redirect that energy towards action that builds and invests in our community. We condemn police brutality and the systemic racism from which it is borne, as they are barriers to the advancement of our community and communities of color in particular. And lastly, we welcome the opportunity to seize this moment in history, to engage with community partners and stakeholders, so that we may secure a better and more just tomorrow.

En Solidaridad,

SANTA CLARA COUNTY LA RAZA LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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