Dear Friends,

As many of you know, in the last few days thousands have congregated downtown to express their grief over the horrible death of George Floyd and so many African Americans before him. Their lives were too short and senselessly lost.

We have been here before and it is very likely that we will be here again. We must learn from what is happening today and from our history, and we need to carry that message forward. Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, and Minnesota may be the current focal points but Denver is not immune to acts of hate and racism. Our city has borne witness to the brutal beating of Alex Landau and the murders of Alonzo Ashley, De’Von Bailey, Marvin Booker, Elijah McClain, and Ryan Ronquillo, to name just a few.

**CU Denver and Office of Diversity and Inclusion Position**

Institutions of higher education are being challenged like never before by a political environment that gives voice to provocateurs of hate, bigotry, and racism. CU Denver strongly respects the U.S. Constitution, its First Amendment, and the right of even the most repugnant viewpoints to be spoken and debated in the public space. But our campus has an equal right to publicly assert what it values and stands for.

As a CU Denver community, we denounce racist, bigoted, and murderous actions against African Americans. And while we do not condone the violence that has come from a small fraction of demonstrators, we cannot stand silent in the wake of the negative portrayal of the larger contingent of peaceful protestors in our great city. I know that national crises often serve as an excuse for increased criminalization, surveillance, and policing of Black communities, communities of color, and LGBTQIA communities. We should not accept this. We should continue to support all communities as they work through their grief and pain and demonstrate against a system that sometimes seems to work against them.

It is imperative that we continue to invest in the intellectual and physical resources to support our diverse and inclusive campus environment. It is imperative we continue to support our Black communities and other communities of color. We at CU Denver are deeply saddened by the horrific violence, loss of life, and displays of blatant racism that have been enacted upon African Americans. In the days that follow and for many months to come, we will be asking how we can best serve our impacted communities; how we can best help them heal; how we can make a difference.

**Social Justice Teach-Ins**

As mentioned in our Friday message, over the next year the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will be holding social justice teach-ins. The very first of these, to be held virtually on June 12, will deal with anti-Black violence. Teach-ins have a long history in our country that goes back to the mid-1960s. They have transformed university campuses into fora in which students, faculty, staff, and community members take collective responsibility on matters of community, national, and global import.
One of the things that makes teach-ins different from, for example, academic seminars, is their focus on producing knowledge for use by participants as members of an organized campus community. Another difference is the use at a teach-in of a “wall-to-wall” approach in which every member of the community is challenged to engage in discussion and debate on the issue at hand. History shows us teach-ins have inspired large numbers of people to expand their sense of the possible. Following each facilitated session, we will hold special break-out groups designed to provide communities with an open and safe space for further discussion. Please consider joining us in this first session and in future ones. We are in active planning mode and will get back to you, likely by next week, with further details. For now, the plan is to hold at least one teach-in each month.

**Doing Our Part**

George Floyd and the other members of our African American community and communities of color, whose lives have been harmed and taken from us, will never be forgotten. The vile acts against these communities run directly counter to our campus mission, our vision and our values for the environment we seek to create on our campus for all students, faculty, and staff. We are committed to doing our part in countering hate and racism by developing programs and initiatives that bring awareness to the value of having a culturally competent, inclusive campus.

We are here for you. Take care of yourselves, and each other. And please check in on each other’s well-being and ask if there’s anything you can do to help those most vulnerable, right now.

**Nelia Viveiros, LLB, EdD**
Interim Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion
ODI@ucdenver.edu