EDI Committee Statement on Black Lives Matter

To Our Students, Staff, Faculty, Community—and to the of Class of 2020:

The UCLA International Institute stands unequivocally against the egregious and disproportionate violence faced by Blacks in America and the systemic disenfranchisement and oppression of marginalized communities across the world. As the home of international studies on the UCLA campus, it is the Institute’s mission to embolden people to connect through their shared humanity and think transnationally and across borders. Yet, these past few weeks have humbled and reminded us of our duty to listen to our community so that we can learn how to be the ally that they deserve in the fight for justice, including against anti-black racism.

The tragedy of George Floyd’s death, which was only the latest in a succession of incidents of police brutality against black people, has sparked worldwide demonstrations of solidarity from Mexico City to Karachi to Seoul. Floyd’s untimely murder at the hands of the police resonates deeply in part because the story of US police brutality, unfortunately, is an international one. Anti-racism activists across the world have seen US protests as a beacon of hope that speak to conditions of structural racism and inequality in their own countries. To name just a few examples, Brazilians marched in honor of João Pedro Mattos Pinto, a black 14-year-old killed by the police, just as Australians marched with placards demanding justice for aboriginal deaths in police custody.

We are inspired to see Black Lives Matter flourish globally and find allies in other movements just as important police reforms are underway in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and across the US. A few reforms will not solve the problem of long-standing structural racism, however. We must continue to examine our own role within the systems that perpetuate racial inequalities and injustices. We must remain vigilant and serve as witnesses to ensure that change continues locally and globally.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” As we celebrate the Class of 2020, we are committed to ensuring that black students, staff and faculty in our community—and everyone who has been made to feel othered, vulnerable and marginalized—feel appreciated, respected, seen, and heard during this transformative moment in US history. We remain committed to ensuring equity and pursuing racial justice through research and teaching across our diverse centers and programs at the International Institute. We will continue to learn from you and work with you so that, “We stand with you,” are not mere empty words but a promise to create safe and inclusive spaces in which we thrive together.

In Community,

The UCLA International Institute Committee for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion