June 30, 2020

Call for Justice and Accountability for Structural Racism and Police Violence

As an academic department rooted in intersectional feminism and formed in the wake of the Black freedom struggle’s achievement of establishing Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, we in the Women’s and Gender Studies department at City College of San Francisco are acutely aware of our interconnected struggles as we fight for liberation on all fronts and reimagine a safer world. We know that there is no gender equality without racial equality; there is no sexual liberation without liberation from white supremacy. We remain committed to ending all forms of power abuse—in personal relationships, social groups, and public institutions—and to examining and combating the role of white supremacy in upholding those abuses. As a department, we commit to learning from, exercising solidarity with, and supporting our students’ leadership within the ongoing movements for Black lives and freedom, and especially in engaging with abolitionist visions of safety and accountability in our work as feminists to end gender-based violence. We aim to work alongside our colleagues in other departments to ensure students’ access to relevant political education to combat anti-Black violence and win long term structural changes that will lead to community accountability and transformative justice.

Our department joins the chorus of voices around the world expressing outrage about police violence, state-sanctioned execution, torture, and incarceration of Black people. We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and those demanding justice in the name of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and countless other Black lives that have been taken at the hands of police. We agree with the analysis of the National Women’s Studies Association that

These horrific killings are symptomatic of structural racism and systemic violence rooted in white supremacy, racialized heteropatriarchy, capitalism, militarism, imperialism, and the carceral state.

The question of violence is at the center of Mr. Floyd’s murder, the protests, and the harsh state response. Equating looting—property damage—to violence, officials have deployed tear gas and rubber bullets, and cops in riot gear have shot and beaten people and arrested protesters en masse. The racially coded language of looting and rioting rationalizes the use of military-style force by the state but fails to take into account the generations of corporate looting, labor theft from Black people, land theft from Indigenous people, and the multiple forms of exploitation and expropriation upon which this country was built. It also fails to

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account for the other forms of state-based violence that shape people’s lives: the epidemic of hunger, homelessness, and unemployment, the decades of disinvestment in poor communities, the millions of incarcerated and detained people, Black and brown service workers who are [forced to risk their lives due to lack of] protective equipment, and the failure of the federal or local governments to ensure the health of the most vulnerable.

The current protests have grown out of justified outrage toward relentless police violence, economic deprivation, political marginalization, inadequate health care, and social isolation.

In the context of these protests, our student Sean Monterrosa was murdered by Vallejo police June 2. We stand with his family and demand justice in his name; we implore the Vallejo Police Department to release the body camera footage, the local and state government to hold the officers and police department accountable, and the Vallejo City Council to enact immediate policy change and oversight to prevent future injustices.

We stand with people around the world protesting state-sanctioned violence directed at Black and brown communities and calling for resistance, justice, and solidarity.

For more information, contact:
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