

A Message to UC San Diego APIMEDA Communities

June 2020

Dear UC San Diego APIMEDA Communities,

I, like many of you, heard about the murder of George Floyd and am angry and frustrated. And soon after hearing of this event, I learned that one of the officers present and complicit in Mr. Floyd's death is an Asian American officer. To me, this reinforces the ways that we as a broader APIMEDA collective, coalition, and community need to come together to learn our own and one another's histories and stand in solidarity with Black people, as our pan-ethnic communities have throughout our time within the United States.

Our history of why this is important

When APIMEDA Program and Services started, students shared that they needed greater context for how we were to come together as a community. APIMEDA as an acronym and an idea was the invention of our students, and it is not something that is a familiar idea. In collecting information about each of the origins of the naming within this acronym, it became clear that what needed to be communicated is the idea that we are a coalition and a collection of communities. The coining of the term "Asian American", after all, by college students at UC Berkeley in the 1960s was to create a coalition between students from different Asian ethnic populations and to aid in the collective voice that they would have with Black students and other students of color. And prior to the Civil Rights Movement and other activism primarily fought for by Black communities, only Black, Asian American, and Pacific Islander people were not considered white. This allowed for school segregation, biased hiring practices, housing segregation, unequal policing and violence, and other practices barring Black and AAPI people from participating equally in American society.

In more recent times, many of our communities have faced race-based violence and targeting. After September 11, members of our Southwest Asian and North African American and South Asian American communities have reported and continue to report micro and macro aggressions. Members in our Southeast Asian American communities face some of the highest levels of threats of deportation despite them entering the US as a refugee or adoptee. And the current recurrence of racism and xenophobia has impacted the personal safety of many East Asian and Southeast Asian Americans. In addition, the current health crisis has disproportionately affected Asian American and Pacific Islander people in California. It is also important to remember that a portion of our APIMEDA communities are Black, as some of our North African American community identifies as Black and because many members of our community from every ethnicity identifies as multiracial.

Now what?

As a coalition and community, it has always been important to learn about ourselves and one another, and to speak up to fight injustice. This current moment is no different. And while it may feel difficult to find the place to start, it is most important to take action. Here are some places you might consider starting:

- If you are a student, look into courses in Ethnic Studies, Critical Gender Studies, Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, and other related coursework to learn more.
- Learn about community and coalition builders in our communities. Our &Me. Project gives you a place to start with learning about Yuri Kochiyama, Haunani-Kay Trask, Rashida Tlaib, and Jose Antonio Vargas, and you might also look up additional people like Grace Lee Boggs, Yuji Ichioka, Vincent Chin, Arthur and Joel Spingarn, and other APIMEDA figures. There are several videos, documentaries, books, and articles on these people and their work, many in their own words.

- Join student and community organizations that will help you learn more about your identity and raise these intersecting concerns with others. If you are in an organization, have these conversations with others, and invite others to join you in your learning.
- Keep an eye out for events that are hosted on campus for you to engage in learning, increasing skills in coalition building, and to actively engage one another. Attend these events, and bring your community with you. APIMEDA Programs and Services hosts annually the Community and Coalition Conference, which we encourage all students to apply to attend.

It continues to be important for us to reflect on the ways that our lives and rights are connected intimately with the lives and rights of Black people. I hope that you all join me in taking a moment to reflect on our experiences and to stand in solidarity with Black communities demanding justice for us all. If you are seeking support to find ways to organize and educate one another, please contact me directly to strategize about ways to move forward.

In solidarity,

Windi Sasaki
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