

Message from President Clark in memory of George Floyd

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To: users-adm <users-adm@wcsu.edu>; users-aca <users-aca@wcsu.edu>; users-stu <users-stu@wcsu.edu>

To students, faculty and staff:

Over this weekend, I had several conversations with members of our University community about the profoundly disturbing and shocking killing of George Floyd by a white Minneapolis police officer. There was agreement a message of condolence about this most current tragedy and support for the fight against racism was in order, but our focus should be on **action** not just **talk**. As our faculty colleague, Dr. Theresa Canada put it, “we must be aware we have two pandemics – COVID-19 and racism that have such devastating impacts on our minority populations in terms of equality, opportunity and justice. And we also must be constantly reminded of the countless victims of such brutality, which so taint our country’s history.”

On a personal note, as a person who came of age during the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War protests, it is disheartening and incomprehensible that a white “police officer” could wantonly kill a person of color in this day and age. After all that our beloved country has been through these past few years, have we learned nothing?

How many times have we seen and heard inspirational speeches and stirring slogans calling for a permanent end to virulent disease of racism only to witness a short time later another killing of a person of color? And today, while the focus is rightfully on George Floyd, what about Ahmed Aubrey and the countless victims before them.

As noted above, there is an exceptionally strong feeling in our community that while **talk** has its place, **action** in the University must be taken to stop this pandemic of racism and its terrible consequences. Consequently, our University community intends to take action. Below are examples of what can be done in the fight against racism and institutional murder:

- Create a scholarship fund for students of color who wish to become police officers so our law enforcement agencies can better reflect our communities throughout the state and region.
- Host lectures, podcasts, discussions, or conduct educational forums like the one we had a few years back entitled “Race, Community, Policing and You – a Conversation to Make a Difference” featuring Danbury Chief of Police Patrick Ridenhour, a State Police representative, WCSU Police Chief Roger Connor, faculty, students and community members to discuss the George Floyd case and other nationally recognized cases as well as to discuss potential solutions to the pandemic of race and violence.
- As Provost Missy Alexander suggested, with the faculty resources we have in education, healthcare, psychology, social work, justice and law administration, sociology and related fields, we could create a multi-disciplinary research group that focuses on evidence-based solutions to the myriad problems of structural racism. That research must work to propose new policies and advocate for legislation on the federal, state, and local levels.
- Take advantage of the many resources at WCSU for support, including:
 - [Counseling Services](#): 203-837-8690 (M-F; 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., or by appointment)
 - [Women’s Center for Greater Danbury](#): (203) 731-5204 and 203-731-5206 (M-F; 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., or by appointment)
 - [Employee Assistance Program](#) (“EAP”): [New Directions](#) and enter the University Login User Name: *Western Connecticut State University*
 - Office of Diversity and Equity, Jesenia Minier-Delgado, (203) [837-8277](#), minierdelgadoj@wcsu.edu

During the coming months, we will discuss other components of our University Action and Research program that will be designed to put an end to racism and its evil consequences that run counter to the spirit of our Declaration Independence: that ALL persons are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

As our Athletic Director Lori Mazza put it so passionately, “We cannot change the past, but we can AS ONE WESTCONN FAMILY, change our future with mutual compassion, listening, respect and, most of all, love.”

Dr. John B. Clark
President
Western Connecticut State University