**Open letter to Biology students in response to BLM protests**

Dear Biology students,

We reach out to you today to acknowledge the gross societal injustices that continue to occur in our country and to offer our support as your mentors and educators. We recognize that right now, focusing on academic goals is difficult while Black Americans are having their lives threatened daily, even while birding. The recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, among too many others, underscores the systemic racism pervasive in our society.

As we enter the final two weeks of the spring quarter, our first concern is of the health and wellbeing of you, our students. As such we are implementing four principles for creating a more equitable classroom:

1. Community: We recognize that Biology faculty, staff, and students are a community that must support each other.
2. Reflection: We welcome conversation around feelings and personal experiences regarding current events.
3. Transparency: We strive to be as transparent as possible in communicating our expectations to you.
4. 4. Flexibility: We will be flexible in the nature and timing of final assignments, exams, and grades.

We recognize that Biology, as a discipline, still has a long way to go toward achieving a truly diverse and inclusive environment. One source of positivity and hope is currently occurring on Twitter: Black Birders Week. We encourage you to support our community of black scientists by reading the pictures and messages they are sharing on the social media platform. They remind us that access to nature is not equally shared among everyone, that representation matters, and that we have much work to do to make our own scientific community more just. You can find the tweets by searching for the hashtags #BlackInNature, #BlackAFInSTEM, #BlackInSTEM, or #BlackBirdersWeek.

In solidarity,

The undersigned faculty and staff of the Biology Dept., CSUSB June 2, 2020

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