

6/1/20

Dear EWU Social Work Community,

It's difficult to find the right words to open this letter. We are saddened and outraged by the unjust deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other Black citizens. To our Black colleagues, students, neighbors, and friends, we see you and recognize how impactful these deaths are for you. Witnessing these deaths in a time when we also know that Black communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is unbearable.

As social workers, we hold social justice as one of our core values. We cannot be silent against the systematic racism that perpetuates these events. Brené Brown, in a recent Facebook post, explained that the system is not broken, it was built this way to benefit those in charge. Rachel Cargle (<https://www.rachelcargle.com/>) presents a three-pronged approach to change that includes Knowledge, Empathy, and Action. This approach aligns well with social work and can help us respond to these injustices. We, and especially those of us who are White, are called to action during this time. Below, I've shared some resources for each area.

Knowledge

It is incumbent upon us to educate ourselves on the systemic racism that has led us to where we are today. Our social work education gives us a foundation for this along with the skills and desire to learn more.

- 1) Rachel Cargle is a public academic, writer, and lecturer (www.rachelcargle.com). View her [Public Address on Revolution: Revolution Now](#)
- 2) Ibram X. Kendi is the director of The Antiracist Research & Policy Center, professor of history and international relations (<https://www.ibramxkendi.com/>). Read his essays on [racism in America](#) and the [racial disparities of the Corona virus](#).
- 3) From New York University's Social Justice Praxis Community (SJPC): Engage with current and historical works like the following:
[History of Police Brutality in America](#)
[The Case for Reparations](#)
[1619 Project](#)
[Freedom is a Constant Struggle by Angela Davis](#)
[The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander](#)
[Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)

[A Guide for Sustaining Conversations on Racism, Identify, and our Mutual Reality by Steve Burghardt, Kalima DeSuze, Linda Lausell Bryant, and Mohan Vijamuri](#)
[13th documentary](#)

- 4) Watch Dr. Martin Luther King's daughter, [Rev. Bernice King on ending systemic racism](#)
- 5) Learn about responding to disparities in education through the June 3rd Webinar [Working for Justice, Equity, and Civic Agency in our Schools: A Conversation with Clint Smith](#)

Empathy

Empathy is a key skill in social work practice. By putting ourselves in another person's shoes and understanding what they experience and feel, we demonstrate empathy.

- 1) Brené Brown's podcast [Unlocking Us](#) examines concepts related to empathy and vulnerability in episodes like [Brene on Comparative Suffering](#)
- 2) Rachel Cargle explains [what it means to be actively antiracist](#)

Action

The NASW Code of Ethics reminds us, "social workers challenge social injustice" (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>).

- 1) From NYC SJPC:
 - Raise awareness and talk about/acknowledge ongoing and historical roots of violence and oppression with family friends, colleagues, peers, and students
 - Contact your members of congress to endorse this resolution
 - Donate to memorial and bailout funds
- 2) From Recommendations for federal, state, tribal and local authority action by the American Public Health Association (Thanks to Dr. Edwina S. Uehara for sharing this):
 - eliminate policies and practices that facilitate disproportionate violence against specific populations (including laws criminalizing these populations),
 - institute robust law enforcement accountability measures,
 - increase investment in promoting racial and economic equity to address social determinants of health,
 - implement community-based alternatives to addressing harms and preventing trauma, and

- work with public health officials to comprehensively document law enforcement contact, violence, and injuries.
- 3) [7 Ways You Can Demand Justice for George Floyd](#) from the Peace & Justice Action League of Spokane
 - 4) [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)

The School of Social Work strives to be a safe and supportive place for our students, community, and colleagues. Please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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