



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY LEADERSHIP RESPOND TO INJUSTICE





# LEADERSHIP DECLARATION

We, the Department Heads of the County of Los Angeles, recognize and affirm that all people are created equal and are entitled to all rights afforded by the Constitution of the United States. We acknowledge that as government leaders serving the most populous and diverse county in the nation, we have an opportunity to change the narrative on the role of government and its relationship to the communities it serves.

Collectively, the work of our departments have far-reaching impacts on all aspects of our residents' lives, particularly in the areas of employment, land use, education, voting, housing, health, arts and museums, infrastructure, justice, veteran services, environmental protections, community and social services, and ensuring a fair and equitable marketplace. Many of the inequities that the work of our departments address are the result of systemic racism and discrimination. We stand against racism in any form and pledge to use our offices to advance racial and social equity, diversity, and fairness.

We will continue to work with renewed purpose to build on progress made in partnership with our Board, employees, customers and the communities we serve to improve quality of life and foster vibrant and powerful communities for all of Los Angeles County.



**A message to employees from Sachi A. Hamai, CEO**  
**June 1, 2020**

I had intended to use this week's letter to celebrate the latest milestones of reopening in L.A. County—the return of in-person dining in restaurants, the opportunity to finally get a haircut—as we work together to continue the incredibly important COVID-19 health precautions that will keep us moving ahead safely in the weeks and months to come.

But instead, I'd like to pause to reflect on the tragedy of George Floyd's death and the ensuing civil unrest that has endangered communities across our County and the nation.

As a County family, we are all feeling the widespread sadness and frustration of this moment.

We share the grief and outrage, and also embrace the importance of seeking productive solutions together.

That is why it is so disheartening to witness the widespread violence, including looting and arson, that has erupted in communities across the County over the past several days. In response, Board of Supervisors Chair Kathryn Barger has declared a state of emergency that will make it easier for us to coordinate assistance across jurisdictional lines, quickly obtain vital supplies, and receive future reimbursement from the state and federal governments.

I recognize the challenges that this new emergency presents, especially for our first responders. As public servants, our County workforce is already handling so much: safeguarding the health of our 10 million residents, assisting the tens of thousands who have been infected with the virus that has killed more than 2,300 of our residents, and helping the many thousands more who have been devastated by COVID-19's economic toll.

Once again, our communities are counting on us to demonstrate the strength and resilience that will bring us through this crisis. I am grateful for your hard work and continued dedication to our County and the residents we serve.







**Public remarks issued by Dr. Barbara Ferrer  
June 1, 2020**

I want to say a few words about events since the Memorial Day murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis. The events in Minneapolis and response to those events are overwhelming and I think it's important to comment on the connection between these two concerns, the death of a Black man at the hands of police, and the experience of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County.

First, I want to express my personal heartbreak and anger, and that of my colleagues at the department of public health, over this most recent death of a Black American at the hands of police officers. There are no words for the horror that the picture we've all seen from Minneapolis brings up. I want to extend my deepest sympathy to the Floyd family and to Mr. Floyd's friends and his community. I also want to extend my condolences to the families and friends of Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade, and the many other families that have borne witness to violence against their loved ones.

And I want to thank everyone who came together peacefully to stand against racism and violence.

I also would like to take a minute to try to connect this brutal event to what we see in Los Angeles County in dealing with COVID-19. We know that Black Americans fare worse than other groups on virtually every measure of health status. And it has become all too common to blame this on individual behaviors when in fact the science is clear: the root cause of health inequities is racism and discrimination and how it limits access to the very opportunities and resources each of us need for optimal health and well-being. Science also tells us that that lifetime stress associated with experiences of daily acts of discrimination and oppression play a major role. It starts at birth, with higher rates of Black infant mortality and shockingly higher rates of maternal mortality among Black women, and extends through adulthood, when we see Black residents of LA County experiencing earlier onset of heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes and early deaths. When I report each week that we have seen elevated numbers of black deaths in this county due to COVID-19, I am reporting on the consequences of these long-standing inequities.

And it is not just the direct victim of violence – the man or woman who is beaten or shot or asphyxiated – who pays the price for police brutality. It is an entire community that lives with the fear that the next time it could be them, or their son or daughter, neighbor or friend. It is the consequence of that fear that we are seeing when we report instance after instance of inequality in health outcomes. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar put it eloquently in an op-ed in the LA Times when he said the black community has to ask itself if “being black means sheltering at home for the rest of their lives because the racism virus infecting the country is more deadly than COVID-19.”

The op-ed piece called for a rush to justice as the answer to events like this. As the department responsible for public health in LA County, and in acknowledgement that addressing law enforcement violence and racism are core to public health, this rush to justice has to be part of our prescription as well.

**Statement of Debra Duardo, LA County Superintendent of Schools**  
**June 1, 2020**

Over the weekend, we watched peaceful protests call for justice and equality after the killing of George Floyd. We saw thousands of people engage in nonviolent peaceful protests. We also witnessed media images of violence in our communities and across America. As the Superintendent of Schools for Los Angeles County, my thoughts embraced our young people.

Today, our children will seek to understand these events. They will turn to us with wide eyes and questions. As adults, we must teach them to peacefully stand up against injustice, racism and inequity. Violence is never the answer.

As young people turn to adults for answers, it is important that we listen and respond with honesty and empathy. The images they have absorbed on the news and social media may result in an array of emotions, including anger, fear and anxiety. We must address those feelings. Helping students recognize and acknowledge their emotions can be a powerful tool in turning these events into a learning experience.

Ultimately, we must look out for each other, continue to create safe spaces for our youth and teach and protect our vulnerable, impressionable young people. My hope is that we shift our focus as a community and come together as one LA County in support of a brighter tomorrow for our children. This week, I will reach out to education leaders and philanthropic supporters to develop ideas to help us move forward.

Today, I call on our educational community to rise and support equity for our children and our county. Last week's death of Mr. Floyd in Minneapolis Police custody must be a turning point in our approach to race and equity. Persistent inequalities in our nation and neighborhoods have also been exposed by the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color – particularly African Americans.

**“ Enough is enough. We cannot continue as we have been. We must use this moment as a turning point to bring about real change. Our children’s future depends on the actions we take today.**



**Los Angeles County  
Office of Education**  
Serving Students • Supporting Communities  
Leading Educators

## **Joint Message from the Offices of the Los Angeles County Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender**

The Los Angeles County Public Defender's and Alternate Public Defender's offices kneel in solidarity with George Floyd and Black Lives Matter. We call for social justice and the end to senseless and needless killings of African-Americans.

Without law enforcement accountability, we get a police officer's knee on George Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes while other officers look on and do nothing. These horrific images are forever seared in our minds along with a shameful list of other African Americans who have met a similar fate. We demand police accountability and the end to systemic racism, overt and implicit, that results in the killing of unarmed Black people.

We hold out hope that these injustices and the resulting uprising lead to fundamental change in our justice system throughout the country including here in Los Angeles County. We demand sweeping police reform including implicit bias training, implementation of duty to intervene policies and separate agencies besides the local district attorney to prosecute officers who break the law. We join the peaceful protestors expressing their First Amendment rights for racial, economic and social justice.

For Angelenos, cellphone footage of Mr. Floyd's killing and the civil unrest that has followed are painful reminders that little has been done to undo the dehumanization of African Americans that started with this country's founding and continues to permeate our justice system to this day.



As public defenders we fight the anti-racism battle each day, zealously upholding the Sixth Amendment, in and outside courtrooms. Like public defenders across the nation, we see the indifference and inequitable treatment of our clients, who are disproportionately people of color. We fight for their human rights and are the voice for the voiceless. We demand that their lives and their voices matter.

This pandemic has underscored the urgency to end institutional racism in our health systems, jobs and jails. We continue to fight mass incarceration and put an end to the daily influx of arrests that do not make our communities safer. We must stop making unwise and unlawful arrests, like the arrest of Mr. Floyd.

Throughout the nation, we must finally end the systemic use of violent police interaction. And when police officers abuse and kill those they are tasked with protecting and serving, there must be accountability with swift and aggressive prosecutions. We are all part of the same humanity and the same community. Only until we unify to become an anti-racist society can we ensure that history does not continue to repeat itself.

We believe as Martin Luther King, Jr. said that "The moral arc of the universe bends toward justice." With renewed energy, we must double down to change that trajectory now, toward the justice that Dr. King envisioned.

**Ricardo Garcia**  
***Public Defender***

**Erika Anzoategui**  
***Alternate Public Defender***



**A communication to employees from Emilio Salas,  
Acting Executive Director on June 10, 2020**

I know that the last two weeks have been incredibly difficult for all of us. Although tension abounds throughout our County, the nation, and across the globe, in the wake of the senseless death of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement...this brings to light how far we have yet to go in the struggle to obtain equality and justice for everyone. While the world around has been dramatically changed by a pandemic, this current wave of protests reminds us of what has still yet to change.

Despite the level of discomfort and uncertainty that these protests bring, it reminds us of the sentiments expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who told us that some prefer the absence of tension to the presence of justice. It is understandable that some may long for a restoration of order and a return to "normalcy." However, it's my opinion that this is exactly what we don't need to happen right now.

For some, normalcy means being followed by security while shopping in a department store. It means jogging through the wrong neighborhood and not making it home alive. It means being detained and slowly suffocated in broad daylight. Even amid a pandemic, normalcy means living in a community of color that has five times the rate of exposure to a virus as compared to wealthier communities within the same County.

In our line of work, we see firsthand how racism and even unconscious bias has led to an overrepresentation of black people experiencing homelessness and the shameful overrepresentation of black and brown people in our County jails. We don't have to look far to see that this struggle is real and yet there is still a segment of our population that thinks everything is ok.

I don't want to pontificate about such a sensitive topic as I know that many of you have very strong feelings about what is going on and some of you have experienced systemic racism directly. But like every family, there are times that we, as a work family, need to have difficult conversations in order to move forward.

In the days and weeks ahead, we will undoubtedly see and hear more about all the work that is left to be done to bring true equality and equal justice to everyone. Although we cannot have large group gatherings, I encourage all of you to have conversations amongst yourselves and think about ways that we, as an organization and as individuals, can make a difference in this fight. I know that the law enforcement community can learn much from our very own Community Policing Team.

All of us come from a different point of view and have lived a different experience. I, for one, grew up in the City of Compton where I witnessed more violence than I care to remember. We have staff members that grew up in war torn countries where mere survival was the only objective. And we have staff that grew up in suburbia, in a nuclear family, but with just as much passion as anyone else in their desire to give back and provide others the opportunity to experience the good that this country has to offer.

Whatever the case may be, we all have something to learn from each other. But we cannot and should not hope to see the tension subside just because it makes us uncomfortable. Let's seize this moment and be the change that we want to see in this world. We do this every day, but now it's time to bring it up several notches. The LACDA is nothing without the people that breathe life into it. Give us your breath of experience, give us your perspective, share your thoughts, and let us be an integral part of the solution.





**Statement from Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga, President and Director  
June 2, 2020**

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County stands with Black communities and commits to be museums where everyone is seen, heard, represented and respected. Protest gives voice to deep anger at injustice, and it has the power to inspire change.

Today, we know the names George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many more - and in knowing their stories we might understand the outrage, the fear, the sadness and the exhaustion Black people carry with them every day. Systemic racism is deeply ingrained in our country's history and daily interactions. And it is further amplified by the moment, in Los Angeles and all across the country, where inequity is deepened and revealed by the pandemic as communities of color are impacted the most.

Founded in 1913, as museums of, for and with Los Angeles, it is our obligation to meet this historic moment, advancing empathy, learning and dialogue. We are committed to build upon our strong foundation to listen, working closely with our community partners, reflecting their perspective with new programming and approaches which embrace principles of social justice, and promote equity and inclusion. We re-dedicate ourselves, and reinforce our mission of inspiring wonder, discovery and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds, and make the commitment to be a true partner in building a better community where there is no tolerance for injustice or racism.



**Communication from Erika Anzoategui  
Alternate Public Defender**

Seeing yet another unarmed Black man killed mercilessly at the hands of law enforcement has caused a deep sadness and reopened old wounds for many. Working as public defenders, we know and understand the current demonstration of pain and frustration due to systemic racism during the ongoing protests has been a long time coming. I know we stand with all who fight against injustice and oppression. Let's hope this moment in time will generate true change and spark the fire for the soul searching needed for people to education themselves on implicit and explicit biases in order to eradicate them.

I want to thank you all for your tireless fight against injustice. Sometimes you may feel it's all for naught, but the images you saw this weekend should solidify the fact that you are needed more than ever! You are the voice to the vulnerable and the oppressed who are routinely cast aside. You call our systemic racism, demand that people listen and face their biases, and fight to right the wrongs created by an unfair criminal justice system.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. George Floyd represents so many people. His death highlights the ongoing issues of systemic racism and injustice that plague our communities. His senseless death shall not be in vain and will help our country realize "enough is enough." It's time to change.

As an office, I am asking that we come together to denounce racism and hate by listening to the communities who have been deeply wounded by not only this recent tragic death but generations of hate.







## A message from Ricardo D. García LA County Public Defender

Public defenders across this country are witness to a history of racial injustice. They rail against a system built to silence, dehumanize and incarcerate Brown and Black people. As public defenders, we listen to our clients, respect their life experience, and tell their story. We are often the only people to recognize the lies in a police report, to challenge an illegal search and planted evidence or to document and shed light on a police officer's assault on a client.

Public defenders believe in the presumption of innocence which too often is nothing more than a vague legal construct to prosecutors, judges and juries. Public defenders are a beacon for evolutionary and revolutionary changes in the justice system. Our calling is to hold the system accountable.

As the Los Angeles County Public Defender, it is my responsibility to deliver on the promise of our Constitution; that regardless of the charge, poverty, race or ethnicity, the accused will receive equal justice and be treated with fairness under the law. It is my duty to help my team hold the system accountable.

George Floyd's horrific murder has laid bare a truth what for African Americans, has always been painfully obvious — the promise of equal justice and humane treatment by law enforcement and the courts is too often a lie. Too often Black men, women and children are presumed to be 'dangerous' or presumed 'suspicious' and they are 'presumed guilty' based on nothing more than the color of their skin. This is fundamentally wrong.

We must hold the justice system accountable for ensuring equal and fair treatment for all people regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

Justice and accountability must start with law enforcement. Certainly, many law enforcement officers are dedicated and conscientious professionals. However, the truth is when officers witness acts of criminal misconduct committed by their colleagues, too many remain silent. Their silence makes them complicit in the perpetuation of such misconduct. Rank-and-file officers must condemn in the strongest terms the acts we saw committed by the four officers in Minneapolis.

Beating a handcuffed suspect is a crime. Filing false police reports is a crime. Stopping a Black man because he is driving a luxury car in an affluent neighborhood is a violation of the 4th Amendment and is illegal. Stopping Black men on the street to 'stop and frisk' them without reasonable suspicion is illegal. Such acts can never be condoned. Police officers themselves must change the culture in their ranks to end such misconduct. They must hold each other accountable.

For the last two weeks, Los Angeles residents and people across our nation, indeed across the world, have registered their justified collective anger and frustration with the consistent and pervasive mistreatment of African Americans in society and in the justice system. The massive number of people across our communities choosing to peacefully protest these injustices was sparked by the torture and murder of George Floyd. These protests reflect our collective scream demanding reform and accountability.

Without accountability, we will continue to see horrific crimes like George Floyd's murder by police where a human being is suffocated with cruel indifference, for nearly nine minutes, while other officers looked on and did nothing. George Floyd's murder along with a list too long and too shameful of others who have met a similar fate, is forever seared in our psyches. I will never forget the image of a police officer's knee on George Floyd's neck and his final words; "I can't breathe." We must demand accountability, we must demand justice and the end to systemic racism, overt and implicit, that results in the killing of unarmed Black men.



**Message to all Parks employees**  
**From Norma Garcia, Acting Director**

In the last couple of months we have faced some of the most challenging times together with the impact of COVID, quarantine and the economy.

The emotional stress associated with the pandemic, social isolation, caring for our loved ones while serving as essential workers and supporting our communities has been significant.

And all of this has been compounded by the death of George Floyd, which has evoked emotions ranging from sadness to frustration to anger to grief.

We have also witnessed throughout the nation, as in many of our County parks, a movement underway to end the senseless deaths of African Americans and to end institutionalized racism.

As park professionals, we are no strangers for standing up for equity. In 2016, we published the Countywide Parks Needs Assessment which illustrated park disparities in communities of color in Los Angeles County. We then supported a park equity movement and the public passed Measure A, which was the first equity ballot measure in LA County dedicating resources to high and very high need park communities.

Last year we made a stronger commitment to inclusion and equity in our mission statement and values.

And in the completion of our Department business operation plan this year, we implemented an “equity formula” to add additional park staff hours to parks located in high and very high need communities.

While the impacts of COVID on the economy has had a direct impact on our Department budget, our collective equity work must continue – we must strive together to ensure that our Department and our public parks are spaces of healing, empowerment, equality, equity and justice – including the most vulnerable – where many of us come from or work in or are passionate about.





**A message from Kristin Sakota, Director**  
**June 3, 2020**

For weeks our personal and professional lives have been filled with news and updates, tracking the responses to and impacts of COVID-19. After days of civil unrest protesting the death of George Floyd and voicing the call for racial justice, I did not want to send another update. Instead, I write to express and acknowledge the sorrow, outrage, and determination that so many of us are feeling.

I come from a long line of African-American public servants and essential workers—military veterans, medial workers, a railroad mail carrier, a surgical nurse, an art teacher—a lineage that survived Jim Crow and the Great Migration in search of a better life. This week, I have been waking to a gaping pit in my stomach, grown wide with the loss of 100,000 lives to this pandemic, a disproportionate number of them from black and brown communities, and the trauma of 400 years, spanning time, across nations, across continents, and oceans of pain. I write to call their names and honor their memory.

As the nation grapples with recent events, I write to uplift the work of our department, the artists and cultural organizations we support, and the diverse communities of Los Angeles County that we serve. I write to speak to the transformational power of arts, culture, and creative expression—to bridge across difference, advance narrative and social change, support equitable and resilient communities, inspire local identity and belonging, reflect our shared humanity, and help us reimagine a better future. In a moment where there can be no going back to "normal" the arts have an important role to play.

As our inaugural year as a department comes to a close and we build on more than 70 years as the Arts Commission, the focus on the importance of our work sharpens. We envision a region where arts, culture, and creativity are integral to civic life and are committed to ensuring all our diverse people and communities have access to the many benefits of the arts. Our work is framed by the guiding principles of the LA County Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative.

Yet we know the full cultural equity and inclusion we envision cannot be achieved without racial equity.

We stand with our Black community and stand against racial injustice. Black art matters, black dance matters, black thought matters, black love matters, black money matters, black grief matters, black joy matters, black lives matter.

I continue to be inspired by all of you, and so many artists, advocates, teachers, organizations, first responders, and freedom fighters. There is more work to do. It's going to take all of us collectively to make lasting change. The very fabric of our culture and our democracy is at stake.



## A Message from Celia Zavala, Executive Officer of the Board of Supervisors

During the past week, we have seen our streets filled with millions of people calling out passionately for social justice in response to the senseless killing of George Floyd -these images have no doubt touched all of us to the core.

We've seen communities share a collective voice. There has been an outpouring of support, a display of courage and frustration, as well as shared pain. We recognize that these past few months have been hard and uncertain as this comes on the heels of a global pandemic.

During these difficult times, we can take great pride in knowing we represent and serve a Board that continues to provide bold leadership and is committed to social justice and the advancement and equality of communities of color.

As an organization, we must reflect on our core values. We use these values to hold ourselves and EO family members accountable every day: integrity, respect, innovation, collaboration, and ownership.

Effective immediately, I would like to announce that we will be updating our Department's values to include Equality. While the spirit of equality is reflected in our existing values and our treatment to our fellow employees and constituents and communities, I believe that directly stating this in our core values better reflects our stance on the fair and equitable treatment of everyone; and, further, it amplifies our intolerance for any behavior or action that would otherwise result in the inequitable treatment of others.

We continue to hold these values high during this time and will continue to use them to provide a platform to elevate the diverse voices and ideas of our staff, which I can proudly say is a reflection of the communities we serve every day.

Our new and existing Department values remind us that we are committed to accepting personal responsibility for behaving honestly and ethically and valuing our differences. They remind us to treat each other with dignity and to use imaginative approaches to overcome barriers. They push us to work together as a team across boundaries to accomplish common goals and commit to taking the initiative to solve problems and transform our challenges into successes.

I am proud to say that the work being done by the EO staff every single day is a testament to how we honor those values. Our Department has been invested in the critical work needed to provide the change our society desperately wants to see. It reflects our commitment to uplift LA County and is in alignment with the mission of the Board we serve.

As we struggle to make sense of this heartbreaking, tragic event, we can take pride in the fact that we are part of the important daily work that needs to happen for true reform. The Board formulated the Executive Office to be the independent counterbalance to other administrative and operational entities within our local government. Here are just a few examples:

- The Civilian Oversight Commission is fighting for our communities by increasing the transparency and accountability of the Sheriffs Department to make sure that it becomes a trustworthy institution that communities of color can begin to build bridges with.
- The Office of Inspector General continues to promote constitutional policing and the fair, ethical, and impartial administration of justice. More than ever, this work is critical.
- Our Civil Service Commission continues to hold all employees accountable to ensure an ethical, fair, and equal workplace.
- Our County Equity Oversight Panel works tirelessly to protect the rights of our employees to be free from discrimination based on a protected status.

There is still so much more work to be done, but we remain optimistic in the steps we have taken to be true agents of change.

I call on each of you to use your individual and collective voices to stand for truth, to speak out in your communities and workplace to help cultivate a culture of diversity and inclusion that recognizes and celebrates the inherent value in each person regardless of race.

This is a daily effort that will pay dividends for future generations. In the coming years, our office is committed to ensuring all of our internal and external decisions are through the lens of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access. This is something you can count on.



**Communication from Joseph Nicchitta, Director**  
**March 31, 2020**

The deaths of George Floyd and those before him are horrific. They have exposed deeply painful scars and provoked sadness and outrage across our country and here, acutely, in Los Angeles County.

I write to acknowledge the anger, pain, anxiety, and hopelessness you may be feeling. You are not alone. DCBA is strong in our diversity, and because of our diversity we suffer together and with our community.

The County will be pushing out work-related information soon. Right now, I simply want to thank you again for being such strong advocates for Los Angeles County, and remind you that I appreciate you, your DCBA colleagues appreciate you, and the County appreciates you.



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY**  
**CONSUMER &  
BUSINESS AFFAIRS**



**A message to staff from Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.  
Director of Health Services on June 1, 2020**

As we begin another month responding to COVID-19, I want to recognize your ongoing efforts to rise up to meet the challenges of this pandemic. Thank you all for your steadfast commitment to providing extraordinary care to our patients.

I also want to take a moment and acknowledge what we are seeing unfold in the County and across our nation. The footage of the tragic and unjust death of George Floyd a week ago is seared into our minds, along with the untimely deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor just weeks before. Now we watch as protestors here in Los Angeles (LA) and across the country denounce these killings and the factors behind them.

We are living in difficult times – dealing with two pandemics: coronavirus and racism. It is heartbreaking to see so many individuals in our communities experiencing such pain. Pain that is acute for so many reasons – the pain of loss, anxiety, isolation, and unemployment – but also pain that is longstanding, the result of decades of individual and systemic racism. And these pandemics sadly are inter-related. We know that minority communities bear a disproportionate number of COVID cases and related deaths because of the impact of structural racism.

In times like these, we must stand together in solidarity and have eyes not only to the challenges of the communities we serve but the struggles of those we work with as well. I am proud, as I know you are, to be a part of an organization whose foundational identity is grounded in the dignity and worth of every human life. Regardless of the color of a person's skin, where they were born, how much money they have, or how they live their life.

We will continue to work toward an LA County defined by justice and peace for our patients and families that we care for. And reaching out to our communities beyond the physical walls of our clinics and campuses.

DHS's values – being Welcoming, Inclusive, Compassionate, Innovative, Excellent and Accountable – describe what we hold dear and will guide us forward. I hope we can all find new ways every day to live out these values with our patients and one another.

We will get through this. We will come out stronger as an organization and, I hope, as a society. During this very trying period, more than ever, we are in this together.

Thank you for your dedication, for being there for each other, and for saving lives.



**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY



## A message to employees from Marcia Mayeda, Director Animal Care & Control

I am reaching out to you in acknowledgement of the events of the past week. It is inspiring to see people of all colors, ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds come together to speak as a unified force to demand justice and equality. The tragedy of George Floyd's killing, shortly after the unconscionable murder of Ahmaud Arbery, has elevated a movement that demands a dismantling of structural racism at every level of society. The collective outrage of humanity against racism has become a powerful voice and serves as a meaningful push for all of us to examine our own beliefs, attitudes, and treatment of others.

At DACC, our team members are of various ethnicities, races, religions, sexual orientations, ages, and other foundational identities that make DACC a culturally rich organization. We serve members of many different communities and must treat everyone with whom we interact with dignity, fairness, objectivity, and compassion. Racism or intolerance of any kind is not tolerated in DACC, and any person may report such an incident through the County's confidential CPOE process. We prohibit retaliation of any kind for reporting such incidents.

However, we know that part of the work of anti-racism is to take an honest look at our programs and services as an organization to see where we can do better. One example of doing this was our change in procedures for dominant dog breed adoptions last year. Our examination of inherent bias in DACC operations showed us that change was called for in this area. We examined our internal processes for inherently biased procedures, and determined that requiring extra adoption applications and interviews for dominant breed dogs led to biases against people interested in adopting them. Rather than judging people by their choice of animal, we moved to a conversational adoption model so we could work collaboratively with the adopters. George Floyd's killing shows us that much more needs to be done to achieve real, true unity in our nation and DACC will continue to seek ways to ensure fairness for its staff, volunteers, and constituents.



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
**ANIMAL CARE  
& CONTROL**

The looting and vandalism that has marred the social protests and demands for justice has blighted the messages being sent by peaceful protesters. We must not let this lawlessness overshadow the demands to end racism. A powerful message on social media has said: Instead of saying, "It's horrible that an innocent black man was killed, but destroying property has to stop." Let's say, "It's horrible that property is being destroyed, but killing innocent black men has to stop."

For all our colleagues hurting right now, please know that you are not alone and that we have resources to support you. It's more important than ever to talk to one another, and to find healing in our common humanity...

Let's stand together to insist on ending institutional racism, bigotry, and discrimination.



**A message to the public from Bobby Cagle, Director  
June 4, 2020**

We are living through one of the most difficult times in our nation's recent history. The roots of the civil unrest taking place run deep; all that was needed was a spark to ignite the smoldering hurt driven by an almost uninterrupted string of injustices throughout the history of our country.

Our communities are crying out for fairness, justice and equity, and it is imperative that we actively listen and understand these concerns, starting by examining our own implicit biases and questioning assumptions we may have held for many years. We must routinely challenge our pre-conceived notions and work with purpose daily to create a culture of safety, equity, and community.

Recent events have highlighted deep disparities and the over-representation of marginalized populations in our child welfare system. The stark reality is that the children and families we serve often live in communities that are disproportionately affected by crime, poverty, violence and trauma brought about by the lack of human compassion and equity.

As a department, we have taken important actions in recent years toward combatting discrimination and injustice, including the implementation of our Office of Equity, which will confront these issues head on by focusing on adaptive change. System disruption often paves the way for transformation, and we are committed to harnessing the energy of this moment to make dramatic, lasting change and continue creating a more just, equitable system for those we serve.

In this moment of introspection, we pledge to embrace our core values and be intentional in our work so that we may be part of the solution. All we need to do is roll up our sleeves and get to the difficult work of changing hearts and minds, as well as systems.

Change begins at home, and at this watershed moment our department will strive to act as forces of peace, stability and justice on behalf of those who need it most.



**Los Angeles County Department of  
Children and Family Services**



**Message from Antonia Jiménez, Director**  
**June 23, 2020**

I want to take a moment to add my voice to the voices of all those in our country who are demanding equality and fair treatment for African Americans. As a person of color, I have experienced firsthand the systemic oppression, marginalization and maltreatment that can occur when individuals pass judgment on others simply because of the color of their skin.

We are witnessing history in the making; despite the threat of a global pandemic and economic uncertainty, people of all backgrounds are marching peacefully in streets across the country in solidarity with African Americans who are experiencing racism.

The good news is that these demonstrations give us hope and a promise for a better tomorrow as we band together and advocate for the change we want to see. This requires all of us to take a personal inventory of our lives and determine how we can bring about positive change in our country. There are many ways to do this, such as making our voices heard at the polls, volunteering for a worthwhile cause, or simply showing more empathy and compassion towards one another.

As your Director and leader of the largest social services agency in our country, I am committed to using my energy to strengthen our programs to effectively lift individuals and families out of poverty and towards economic mobility. My commitment is rooted in the reality, and validated by data, that many of those who rely on DPSS services come from diverse backgrounds and underserved communities. The recent Coronavirus pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement validates further that we in government must do more to provide greater access to health care and social services for minorities and racial equality for African Americans, as well as all Americans.

DPSS, as the heart and soul of LA County, will continue to play a critical role by serving the individuals and families who rely on us for food, health care and shelter. The diversity of the DPSS workforce is representative of the multi-cultural population we serve, and it is also our greatest strength, which allows us to learn from one another and grow together as a community. I want to encourage all employees to continue to respect and value our differences, with an understanding that we are all working together for a common goal and stand together as Americans.

I will close by expressing my sincere appreciation for the work that you do to improve the lives of the individuals and families we serve. As we navigate through the pandemic and social inequality in America, I want you to know that I stand with you and your families to bring about the change we all want to see.





**Communication to employees from Lisa M. Garrett  
Director of Personnel on June 9, 2020**

2020 is a year of change. Across the County and throughout the nation individuals are standing up in peaceful protest to denounce racism and demand justice for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and all those who lost their lives at the hands of law enforcement.

As a DHR community, we denounce racism in any form. Period. As the County leaders in equity and inclusion, as public servants, and as friends, colleagues and family members, we must continue to call for the elimination of discrimination and oppression of all kinds, including in our justice, healthcare, education, housing and employment systems.

It has always been through the efforts of advocates and the movements they built that our nation has progressed. As a result, legislation has been enacted throughout our history to advance equity, including, but not limited to following:

- **1776** – Declaration of Independence
- **1848** – Women’s Suffrage Movement
- **1865** – Passage of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude.
- **1866** – Civil Rights Act declaring all citizens were equally protected under the law, without respect to race, color or previous condition; prohibited racial discrimination in the sale or rental of property.
- **1920** – Women were granted the right to vote
- **1963** – Equal Pay Act prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination.
- **1964** – Civil Rights Act outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin; prohibited unequal application of voter registration requirements, employment, and public accommodations.
- **1968** – Fair Housing Act
- **1990** – Americans with Disabilities Act prohibiting discrimination based on disability.
- **2019** – Equal Pay Act requiring equal pay for the same or similar work.

When I look at this significant list of legislation, I ask myself if we are truly doing all we can to stamp out inequities in our society. I think it is fair to say that we have not yet arrived.

A law that is not enforced is simply a collection of words on parchment. This is one of the reasons I wanted to become an attorney - to fight for the rights of others. This is what drew me to public service - to provide equitable services and opportunities afforded by the government to those who need a safety net. This is why I love the field of HR – to create pipeline programs for individuals with barriers to employment and to develop and provide growth opportunities for DHR and County employees.

As a woman of color and mother of two young black men, I stand with our LA County community and other communities nationwide in the fight to eradicate racism and its many vestiges. I stand with others to lift up those who have been blocked or excluded from the axiom “liberty and justice for all.” What we learn from the above list of legislation is that laws alone don’t make change - civil and fair-minded people do...

We cannot foresee how long this civil unrest will continue, but we can stand together to provide empathy and understanding for those who march. We can be respectful of the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs each of us holds. We can show that same respect in our communications with and actions toward each other, our County colleagues and the members of our communities we are privileged to serve.

There is an African proverb that says: *The drum beats loudest before it bursts.* I hear the sound of positive change. Can you hear it?





**Communication from Department of Mental Health  
Executive Team on June 3, 2020**

We are thinking about the countless individuals who have had their lives cut short by racism and the violence it brings. We mourn the senseless and tragic loss of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others before them. We also acknowledge the experience of Christian Cooper and countless other men and women of color before him that can have lasting psychological impacts. We also affirm the feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, fear and sense of powerlessness that members of our DMH Work Family and communities are experiencing.

We stand in solidarity with those who are protesting against the continued killing of Black people and the systems and attitudes, like implicit biases, which actively and passively enable such atrocities.

The ongoing pain and trauma we continue to witness being experienced by all communities who are oppressed by the systems of our nation, demands that our Department respond with empathy as we serve our LA County residents and connect with our DMH Work Family. We are called to find ways to outreach our DMH colleagues and to heal the diverse communities we serve.

We don't have to live our fellow humans' experience to obtain understanding and be moved to support a better outcome for them.

It is critical to remember that empathy requires listening with an open heart and mind. The conversations are sometimes uncomfortable but necessary to gain a robust understanding of the lived experiences of individuals we serve as well as work with daily. Indeed, growth and learning happen in the spaces outside our comfort zones and require thoughtful exploration of our own values and actions.

Building resiliency within individuals, families and communities impacted by the pain and trauma surfaced and/or reignited by Mr. Floyd's death is a key component of healing.

“As the Department of Mental Health, we are positioned to provide the needed support, from a place of humility and understanding, so we Rise Up from this dark place of hurt into the warm light of healing.”

