



MEDIA RELEASE

A Statement from Mayor Murillo on the Death of George Floyd

SANTA BARBARA, CA – May 31, 2020 @ 4:30 P.M.

I feel in it is my duty as your Mayor to address our current national landscape head on.

Over the course of the last week, the videotaped arrest and death of a seemingly passive, middle-aged, Midwestern black man -- by force of a white law enforcement officer and his peers -- has become a tipping point that has fueled a solidified and collective voice of well-earned righteous indignation.

In an instant, our public health conversation has taken a pause to confront a dialogue on race. My heart hurts for the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Most of us can never assume to know what it's like to walk in the shoes of Black America – members of the marginalized community are rightfully scared and angry with a range of emotions. As a Latina, I share a glimpse of the disenfranchisement commonly experienced by people of color.

I express my deepest condolences to the Floyd Family and all Black Americans. We each grieve his death in our own way.

Over the weekend, cities across our nation have become flashpoints of civil unrest. Our local government stands in solidarity with those who choose the pre-ordained right to peacefully protest. To mend wounds, anger must eventually be channeled into introspection, education, and action right here at home.

I agree strongly with the statement released by the regional NAACP – as a country – we must prevent what happened to George Floyd and countless other Black souls who have lost their lives in situations that are steeped in a system of institutional bias that is pervasive. FBI Director Christopher Wray said it best -- opining -- the events following Floyd's death clearly illustrate how quickly public trust can be lost.

I applaud Santa Barbara Police Chief Lori Luhnnow for her courageous leadership to ensure simultaneous dialogue and action to address race in policing. I have seen first-hand how our police officers engage in compassionate policing. On a daily basis, they contribute to an authentic community relationship that solidifies the public's trust. The agency provides enhanced technical training on important topics such as principled policing and implicit bias. Moreover, they engage local community members to participate in that training.

I want to thank the Santa Barbara Public Library for their contribution to promote a timely literary introspection on race and justice for all. It is through that self-dialogue – we internalize varying perspectives and learn to empathize with people different from us. The Library has curated a list of more than 100 available books on the history of racism, anti-racist work, and how to talk with your child about race.

It includes New York Times Best Seller – 'How to Be an Anti-Racist' – by Ibram X. Kendi. The book, purposefully confronting, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. Each literary work can be checked out through the Santa Barbara Library's website via the Overdrive electronic catalog.

Last, it is never too late – from young to old – to ask – How do I act on personal bias? How can I question my engrained belief system? Those foundational questions can be properly engaged by way of formal education.

As someone who has dedicated her life's work to today's youth -- I call on regional educators to endorse an elementary through high school Ethnic Studies curriculum. Ethnic Studies provide a complex and truthful history of our country and the people who make up its society. Our students can take pride in their cultural identity and engage in solution-oriented ways to thoughtfully address race as a subject matter.

Unjust situations happen – even right here in Santa Barbara. We owe it to ourselves to account for our own individual culpability. We must always reach for a higher standard of racial equity.

These words are not meant to be an end – but the beginning of a well-deserved dialogue to advance social equity in Santa Barbara. We owe it to tomorrow’s future to break the cycle of today’s bias.

-- Signed

Cathy Murillo

City of Santa Barbara Mayor