Joining Social Work Programs from across the nation, the Faculty of the Master of Social Work Program at CSU, Stanislaus, feel it is our responsibility to speak out against white supremacy and any actions which legitimize or nurture conditions that lead to racism, hatred, violence, and intolerance. We believe that it is incumbent upon our leaders (national, state, and local) to not only speak out against white supremacy but to foster and engage in actions that promote social justice for all members of our society.

As the calendar advances, the tragic events of Charlottesville might be moving away from the forefront of our consciousness. Nevertheless, the hatred that led to the violence is intimately connected to our community. In the past two weeks, the Northeast region of Turlock has been plastered with white supremacy propaganda. Many of our community constituents are aware of the fact that a current student at CSU, Stanislaus, is the founder of a white supremacy group (Identity Evropa) and has been a participant in violence at white supremacy demonstrations. As a result, calls have been made for his expulsion.

We are encouraging our campus community to critically consider actions beyond those at an individual level, in favor of supporting or undertaking efforts to oppose systemic and institutional racism; efforts that foster a safe and critically reflective learning community.

The overwhelming compilation of scholarly work tells us that racism, white supremacy and oppression will not be addressed through myopic actions that are based on “weeding out” those whom we deem to be bad people. As a matter of fact, this individualized (perpetrator) approach to racism (our historic intervention strategy) serves to mask the fact that racism and white supremacy are endemic and part of the fabric of America. Disproportionality rates in our major institutions (to include the Criminal Punishment system/Legal system, Political system, Health & Human services, and the Educational system) remind us daily of the pervasiveness of institutional racism and white supremacy. As an institution of higher learning, it is our obligation to help our community engage in critical dialogue, critical inquiry, and action to address structural inequities that emerge out of institutional racism and white supremacy.

As such, we are calling on all members of our campus community to explore complex strategies for pursing social justice that allow us to “weed out” institutional racism. We offer a framework (The Four Pillars of Social Justice) created by the Miami Workers Center as a starting point to guide our thinking. While the Four Pillars Model was offered as a “social change theory” for non-profit organizations to better meet the needs of disenfranchised groups, we think it is highly applicable to organizing dialogue and actions aimed at confronting and dismantling institutional
racism and white supremacy. The model is helpful for understanding how multiple strategies can be connected to build viable change strategies. The four pillars are: The Pillar of Service, the Pillar of Consciousness, the Pillar of Policy, and (most importantly) the Pillar of Power.

The Pillar of Service encompasses actions that work directly to serve vulnerable populations and help stabilize their lives and promote their well-being.

At minimum, this would be expressed via a previous call that we made to former President Sheley: “The Psychological Services on our campus need to be strong and focused on both prevention and intervention. Members of the Counseling faculty need to be intimately connected to the broader campus community. They cannot simply be located in an isolated center where they are called upon to fix “broken” people. Rather, Counseling faculty need opportunities to “teach and learn” (not in a traditional classroom but in the broader campus community and beyond) about what can be done to support students and colleagues and to promote best practices for supporting wellness…They [counseling faculty] need the same assurances and protections (academic freedom) that their faculty colleagues in other departments have to raise, identify, and confront the complex and sensitive issues that lead to violence: particularly structural issues such as institutional racism, neoliberalism (to include state violence), heteronormativity, sexism, and ableism. Without such protections, we believe that the violence producing structural issues that are part of our institution and institutions that directly impact our campus will go unaddressed.”

The Pillar of Consciousness includes work that aims to shift political paradigms and alter public opinion and consciousness.

For us, at minimum, this is the work of faculty. Faculty need to be supported to engage in classroom and community efforts which promote and support critical dialogue. It is our professional obligation to create learning environments that encourage and support very difficult conversations: conversations that are certain to have points of disagreement; conversations that are certain to be frustrating, anxiety producing, and uncomfortable. A fundamental “truth” in our Program is a question that we pose to our students on a regular basis: how do we fight oppression (in the pursuit of social justice) without becoming the oppressor?

The Pillar of Policy involves actions that involve changing institutional structures and policies that impede the progress of disenfranchised groups.

Again, at minimum, this requires our University to be vigilant in examining policies and practices around hiring, admissions, retention, graduation, and ongoing support to all members of the campus community (students, staff, faculty, and administration), with a focus on insuring that written policy and institutional practice align.

The Pillar of Power (described as the most fundamental pillar) involves engaging groups in meaningful relationships that expand their participation and leadership in addressing the problem that is before them. (In other words, disenfranchised populations must be engaged in the issue and afforded the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the actions that are being developed to “help them.”)
Again, *at minimum*, this Pillar suggests that the University would create spaces and opportunities for students (and student groups/organizations) to come together to engage in dialogue, critical reflection, and action related to fighting institutional racism.

We, the Faculty of the MSW Program, stand in solidarity against racism and white supremacy, and we are hopeful that this communiqué will inspire others to work in collaboration with us to begin taking actions that promote social justice in our institution and beyond.

Sincerely,

The Faculty of the Master of Social Work Program at CSU, Stanislaus

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*A more detailed description of the Four Pillars Model can be found in Dean Spade’s book, *Normal Life* (2011).*