



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

CHICANO AND LATINO STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Thursday, March 10, 2016

RE: CHLS Department Statement on Campus Safety: Knife Incident

The Department of Chicano & Latino Studies wishes to extend our support to our fellow CLA colleague and the students who were affected by the classroom incident that took place on February 25. While what transpired that day may have different interpretations and we respect that the case is still under legal investigation, we feel it necessary to publicly address key issues that remain significant regardless of these factors. As a department that centrally employs race as a critical lens throughout its curriculum, we are deeply concerned by the context within which the incident occurred.

The affected students were enrolled in a general education sociology course focused on the intersecting topics of race, class and gender and taught by a woman of color faculty. The knife in question was brought out during a class discussion on racism. As a result, we believe that in addition to the statements that have circulated regarding the need for ensuring the general safety of individuals at the university, the incident requires broader and interrelated discussions on this campus about race.

Moreover, we believe the university should take this opportunity to commit concrete time and energy to addressing our students' emotional wellbeing and, in particular, their mental health. A knife of any size taken out by a student at any point and for any reason during a class session invariably suggests an aberration to the principles of community we espouse in our classrooms that have served us well in engaging difficult conversations. Rather than limiting the assessment of this action to the likelihood of imminent threat, we should also consider the stressors that led to the need for an assessment in the first place. In particular, we feel that the context of the situation that took place on February 25 is especially pertinent.

Across the nation, aggression and fear surrounding race have led to countless acts of violence and suffering. At the same time, the increasing consideration of related topics such as white privilege has resulted in a negative backlash against those attempting to challenge racism. This being the case even when critical race analyses could guide us toward dismantling an integral power structure that divides and transfixes inequalities, including those across other areas such as class and gender. These interrelated factors should not be lost in the forthcoming days that will determine the outcome of the February 25th incident. Body politics matter and they should be included in the assessment of such a situation and its aftermath. Indeed, doing so can perhaps better help us prevent future aberrant occurrences. We hope that the university will take a lead role in ensuring a safe and civil environment for all of its members, and that it will also resist reading incidents like this one in abstraction in favor of the greater insights that a nuanced, racially sensitive one could reveal.

Jose F. Moreno
Chair, Chicano & Latino Studies

On Behalf of the undersigned CHLS Faculty & Staff*:

Alex Alonso, Luis Arroyo, Elizabeth Gonzalez Cardenas, Alfredo Carlos, Antonia Garcia Orozco, Melissa Moran, Monica Palacios, Gen Ramirez, Loretta Ramirez, Rigoberto Rodriguez, Victor Rodriguez, Maythee Rojas, Anna Sandoval, Michelle Seales, Jose Luis Serrano Najera, Griselda Suarez, Armando Vazquez-Ramos

*CHLS Faculty listed are those who responded in time for permission to add their name publicly. Given our want to share our collective support as quickly as possible, any names not included does not suggest any less support for the content of our statement.