

Dear Members of Local 3778:

We saw today that silence speaks volumes. Many of you have been under duress with the economic, mental, and financial strains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. 2020 has been an especially stressful year, and just last week, there was another event in Minneapolis which further pushed people to places of stress, of anger, of fear. I refer, of course, to the excessive use of force displayed by an officer that unfortunately resulted in the unnecessary death of George Floyd. I don't believe that officer, or the world, could have predicted what would happen next: protests on an unprecedented scale, in support of racial equality. In short, people had finally had enough of the unjust system and chose to express that through peaceful protest. Unfortunately, certain people took advantage of the emotional and political climate to loot and riot, which mobilized our New York City police officers and placed a mandatory curfew on non-essential personnel, an act which has not been implemented since 1945. As members of the NYPD, some of you may have mixed emotions. In an organization as big as the NYPD, there are going to be many different mindsets, many different backgrounds, and many different ideas about these topics. If it feels like it's difficult to talk about these things, that's because it is. But nothing worth having comes easy.

During our meeting today with the members of the Controlled Substance Analysis Section of the Police Laboratory, many of these ideas and emotions were shared. People apologized for their silence, or perceived silence, encouraged conversation and prayer. I'm writing today to attempt to aid in starting these conversations. What many of you may not know about me is that I am an immigrant to this country. I spent years dealing with issues concerning immigration, and while this is nothing compared to the injustices we are seeing today, it did inspire me to educate myself, and to seek to educate others. I spent the last few years volunteering with a group of underprivileged, underrepresented youths, teaching them "Life Awareness", and talking about the big issues that they would face as they navigated this complicated world. I've compiled some of that knowledge here, to attempt to get people to start thinking about things they have never had to think about, in order to be able to have these conversations. For those members who wish to be better Allies, or to have more of an understanding of the situation:

Do the research. It is not the job of people of color to educate you on what the issues are, or about what you can do to help. Google is a real thing. Asking others to explain things to you isn't "getting information from the source", it's a burden on a group of people who are tired of having to explain and not being believed anyways. Need help getting started? Get on the internet, search the history of the civil rights movement, search the history of the Black Lives Matter movement, search how to be a better ally. On that vein, educate others, whether it's your friend, your family, whether you have all the information or not. If you hear other people saying something problematic, don't stay silent. Silence helps the oppressor, not the oppressed. It may be awkward or tough at first, but it will get easier. Also understand that you can disagree with someone without hating them. There are lots of times when healthy discourse and disagreement can be good for understanding different viewpoints. "Should this person or group of people be treated humanely" is not one of those times. Trust me, it isn't.

Check in on friends, family, and colleagues. As I mentioned, everyone has been under immense stress this year. In a perfect world, the impact on economic, emotional, and physical health would have been stressful enough, but the death of George Floyd was the latest in a long line of unnecessary deaths due to excessive force. People are not okay. Now is the time to be available and understanding. You may not even realize the consequences

of your words and actions, and how they may affect the people around you. Try to be conscientious. We're all in this together.

If possible, choose to donate to or do business with people and organizations that support equality. As I mentioned, it is understood that the halt on the economy may affect people differently, but you'd be surprised at how little is actually needed. Conversely, don't support people or organizations that actively work to promote inequality. Follow the money. Write your local congressperson. Vote, if you're able to.

Don't take things personally. There is a lot of emotion tied to talks about racial inequality. You are not excused from the issues just because you are not actively working against them, but you are also not on trial. There is no need to be defensive. If you are serious about wanting to be an ally of equal rights, don't listen to respond. Listen to understand. You don't get to tell someone how they're feeling (as in, you don't get to say that someone shouldn't be upset about something that happened). If someone (including yourself) is getting upset, take a moment, but come back to the topic.

Don't argue semantics. The most common example here is "privilege". As most of us have chosen a career in math and science, we should be able to understand that the same word may have different meanings or connotations in different environments. We fundamentally understand that a "theory" in science, for example, is very distinct to how it is used by the layperson. Likewise, when privilege comes up in conversation, it does not mean that what you have not earned, or that you have lived a life free of struggle. It just means that the color of your skin is not contributing to those struggles.

Plan long-term. This is not a new issue, and it will not be fixed overnight. It is important to keep addressing the larger issues, even after the protests have stopped. Understand the underlying causes, and work towards preventing them, so that one day there may be a future without any more Trayvon Martins, without any more Eric Garners, or Michael Browns or Tamir Rices or George Floyds or any other unfortunate casualties in the fight for racial equality.

Continue to check the local website for updates on information and resources. Your executive board is always working towards being understanding and addressing the issues that concern our members. There are lots of great resources on there. Note that neither this nor the website is an all-encompassing list. Continue to do your own research as well.

We understand that this is a difficult time for everyone, so please always feel free to reach out. To talk. To vent. As your local, we are here for you, to get through this together. And we WILL get through this. But until then, we will continue working towards equity, equality, and accountability.

In solidarity, now more than ever,

Daniel Santamaria Outeiral

Secretary-Treasurer, Local 3778