



Citrus College Conversation and Call to Action
June 12, 2020
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

23 Attendees Including:

Dr. Geraldine M. Perri – Superintendent/President

Dr. Martha A. McDonald – Vice President of Student Services

Dr. Martha McDonald opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and introduced Superintendent/President, Dr. Geraldine Perri.

Dr. Perri welcomed the students and thanked them for participating. She acknowledged that it may be difficult for the students to be present and commended them for being part of the Citrus College Conversation and Call to Action dialogue. She spoke about how these were extremely difficult times for our students - first by being faced with a pandemic and then our nation witnessing a violent act of racism. Dr. Perri noted that Citrus College stands in support of its Black students, faculty, staff and community members. She indicated that as a college, we value equity, diversity and inclusion, and that as a college of completion, we are committed to the success of our students. She noted to the students that the college community wants their experience - both inside and outside the classroom - to be a positive one. Dr. Perri mentioned that the college is moving forward with the formation on a task force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Additionally, she said that on Tuesday our Board of Trustees will take action on a resolution in support of a way forum and the statewide Call to Action on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and anti-racism.

Dr. McDonald then introduced guest moderators Azizi Williams, Assistant Head of Sequoyah School in Pasadena and Emily Singer, Director of Curriculum and Support at Sequoyah School in Pasadena.

Azizi and Emily briefly introduced themselves and shared the following poem by Micky Scott Bey Jones:

*Together we will create a brave space
Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to mare truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be*

*But it will be our space together
And we will work on it side by side.*

The moderators also shared their admiration for the Teaching Tolerance website at www.tolerance.org for those who may be interested in resources for learning more. Azizi and Emily then invited conversation from the attendees.

Themes of the discussion are noted below:

- Attendees were very appreciative of the platform, and the opportunity to speak.
- Dealing with microaggressions and not so microaggressions on a daily basis has been hard for students of color. It was expressed that there has been an overwhelming expectation that the Black community would never see justice. The underlying hope in this tragedy is that this is no longer the expectation as there is now a demand for change.
- It may not be apparent, but there are Citrus College students who have been affected by the death of George Floyd on levels of racial injustice due to cultural background, as well as the effects of COVID-19 due to the fact that they are business owners.
- Our students are out there protesting and fighting for their own lives, as well as those of their children.
- Students are starting to have hard conversations with friends and family.
 - Some students are saddened to see the conflicting view-points of their family and friends. Often discussions turn into arguments.
 - Unfortunately, Black students are learning that there is some quiet bias coming forward from those they least expected.
 - Some fear that the looting has created another bias in grouping protestors along with rioters and looters; thereby perpetuating the stereotype of the angry Black man/woman.
 - Students have been having discussions with family and friends, and are being diligent about educating their own parents, siblings, and kids.
- We show support for Black actors, rappers, culture, but we will not fight for their people.
 - Why is there a line to distinguish those who we are willing to support?
 - The bottom line is we are all people, we should all support each other.
- Remember to talk about the issues. Although you may not fully understand what someone is going through, you can invite conversation from them, and share your own experiences with such issues.
- One student recollected growing up with a father in law enforcement has helped him to keep an open mind and see both sides of the issue. He recalled having restrictions different than his friends, such as wearing appropriate colors – a concept he grew to understand as a young Black man.
 - It is important to remember that we cannot continue the hate and racism. We want change, and we do not want to continue negative speech and experiences.
- Students are grateful that clubs on campus have allowed for opportunities to work together.
 - Latino clubs on campus are happy to support and work with Black student clubs.
 - Black Student Union has provided a wonderful opportunity for Black students to come together and show support and accountability for each other.
- One student stated that for years it has been heartbreaking having to have conversations with her children about injustices that they will witness first-hand in their own lives. Attending these protests has shown a different side – many people of

different colors, backgrounds and ethnicities breaking barriers and marching together is also providing a new level of hope. We are no longer alone. We are there side-by-side.

- In this same regard, they expressed the importance of having people of color and diversity in higher positions within the college.
- It is important to have peers who look like them in their classrooms, learning side-by-side.

Dr. Perri thanked students again for attending and assured the students that we are in the process of reassessing our policies, procedures and plans. She again thanked the group for sharing and providing their experiences. Though some of the feelings and experiences expressed fear and pain, they also provided a message of hope and progress.

Dr. McDonald thanked the students for attending and sharing their thoughts, experiences and concerns.