

A Community Call to Action

Dear Hornet Family,

Who was Tyre Nichols?

He was the youngest son of his beloved mother, RowVaughn Wells, and bonus-father, Rodney Wells. He was a brother to three siblings, a father to his 4-year-old son. He was a family man, and he was from Sacramento. Tyre worked for FedEx in Memphis, Tennessee, spent time at Starbucks with a group of diverse friends, was a skateboarder and an artist. His friends and family described him as a “kind soul, a gentleman, a free spirit, a landscape artist, and a man who loved his mother” to infinity. He was a man who had a standing lunch and dinner with his mother and loved her sesame seed chicken. He was a human-being who graced this earth for only 29 years before his fatal encounter with five African American police officers from the Memphis Police Department.

You might ask, why is the race/ethnicity of the police officers relevant?

It is relevant because it speaks to a toxic institutional culture that transcends individuals’ race/ethnicity and needs to be addressed within some – not all – police departments. This culture, based on outdated traditional policing, continues to dehumanize Black and brown Americans, especially the youth.

It is relevant because there is a systemic pattern and history of unarmed Black men and women disproportionately experiencing beatings, harm, excessive force, asphyxiation, shootings, and death at the hands of those who are sworn to protect and serve.

It is relevant because the behavior and outcomes must be called out, since it is the same in all of these cases:

Henry Dumas (1968, New York City), James Earl Green (1970, Jackson State University, Florida), Rita Lloyd (1973, New York City), Barry Gene Evans (1976, Los Angeles), Eula Mae Love (1979, Los Angeles), Eleanor Bumpers (1984, New York City), Yvonne Smallwood (1987, New York City), Rodney King (1991, Los Angeles), Amadou Diallo (1999, New York City), Malcolm Ferguson (2000, New York City), Oscar Grant III (2009, Oakland, California), Michael Brown, Jr. (Ferguson, Missouri), Eric Garner (2014, New York City), Tanisha Andersen (2014, Cleveland, Ohio), Stephon Clark (2018, Sacramento), Ronald Greene (2019, Monroe, Louisiana), Atatiana Jefferson (2019, Fort Worth, Texas), Breonna Taylor (2020, Louisville, Kentucky), George Floyd (2020, Minneapolis, Minnesota), Daunte Wright (2021, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota), Tyre Nichols (2023, Memphis, Tennessee).

Unfortunately, there are hundreds more on this list. More often than not, the perpetrators have received little or no punishment, making their actions a form of state-sanctioned violence.

What must we do?

We are all required to question the preparation and implicit or explicit codes of silence that new police cadets are exposed to: academy training, rank-and-file accountability, inaction, lack of restraint, abuse of power and authority, failure to de-escalate, failure to call for aid, and the devaluing of life, particularly those of Black and brown people. Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn Davis, in a one-on-one [interview on ABC/24](#) where she diagnosed police department culture and the challenges within her department, set a precedent for how chiefs of police departments should respond if and when these types of incidents occur. She responded with compassion, transparency, accountability, and swift action.

At Sacramento State, we remain steadfast on our mission to become an antiracism, inclusive, anti-oppression, and healing campus community. Visionary University Police Chief Chet Madison Jr., who leads our Community Safety Advisory Board, stated in a [social media post](#) that “(W)e condemn the actions and inactions seen in the video. If there’s any officer who isn’t disgusted by this video, they should turn in their badge. Memphis Police Department officers that night broke the public faith and trust that was given to them when they swore their oath and pinned a badge on their uniform.”

As President Robert S. Nelsen referenced in his message, “[Another killing, and our hearts break again](#),” we are “calling in” our community to come together in a community forum and dialogue as well as healing space to process this most recent case of inhumanity and generate viable solutions to address this particular historic and predictable inequity.

In collaboration with the MLK Center, the Multi-Cultural Center, Black Staff and Faculty Association, Black Alumni Association, Legacy Women’s Professional Community of Practice, Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice (CRISJ), Sac State Police Department, and Inclusive Excellence, we will host a community forum and collective action dialogue. Please join us at 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the University Union. During February, we will host multiple healing spaces for processing this latest incident. I remain hopeful that together we can end all forms of hate, bias, and violence.

In partnership,

Dr. Mia Settles-Tidwell
Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and University Diversity Officer

February Healing Spaces

Black Staff and Faculty Association

Healing Lunch, 12 – 2 p.m. Feb. 23 at the Well Terrace. [RSVP](#)

Center for Race, Immigration, and Social Justice (CRISJ)

Community Healing Space, 3 – 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays, beginning Feb. 1 at Library 67.

Cooper Woodson College

TBD.

Multi-Cultural Center and MLK

Healing Walk-ins, 1 – 2 p.m. Feb. 1 at the SASEEP Conference Room, third floor of Lassen Hall.

Residential Halls will hold healing space for students

TBD.

Resources

- Students can visit [Student Health and Counseling Services online](#) and at 916-278-6461. After-hours calls will be routed to a 24-hour advice line.
- Sacramento State has counselors ready to support faculty and staff through our [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) online](#) and at 800-367-7474. This service is available 24/7.

Other Info

[CRISJ Letter Regarding Mother Jones](#)

[CRISJ statement on George Floyd](#)

[Barajas Letter to the City](#)

[View Online](#)