



Officer Letter to Members in Solidarity and Sympathy

We write to express our profound sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and to recognize that many members of NCA are feeling like we are: angry, hurt, sad, and disgusted. We write to tell you we are with you and recognize the incredible heartache so many are feeling in these times. We want you to know that our emotions, too, are raw, and that we want to make a useful contribution as your elected leaders.

It probably goes without saying that media scholars among us probably cannot help but notice the various ways information about the protests taking place across the country are coming to us through television, Twitter, Facebook, and various other media platforms.

Rhetoricians undoubtedly have noticed that the terms “looters,” “thugs,” and people “up to no good” being invoked reproduce past discourse by media and national leaders during racially oppressive times in the US past. Also, they might notice that an equivalent vocabulary for what Minnesota police officers did to George Floyd does not appear to have been coined or reproduced, at least not by national news outlets.

And, interpersonal communication scholars who watched the “dialogue” between two of George Floyd’s family members and the Minneapolis police chief on CNN could not help but wonder about the setting for such a “conversation,” the limits of intimate communication on television, and the parameters for expressing care via mediation.

Finally, members interested in freedom of speech and expression and free enterprise politics surrounding media industries likely are keeping a close eye on the degree to which reporters are being surveilled and regulated, and police, security, and cell phone cameras are being used as evidence.

Society needs communication experts to improve race relations and chip away at institutional racism and corresponding institutionalized discrimination; to educate people on how to get along, work together, talk in public, and write legislation that helps society; and to help people understand the history and present of white supremacist practices, institutions, and discourses.

At this moment, in addition to other necessary self-care practices, we encourage action and using your experience as communication experts as a response to any grief, helplessness, anger, resentment, loneliness, and frustration you might be feeling.

Communication is central to both how we are learning about these events as well as how to help heal our society.

In solidarity,

Kent A. Ono, NCA President
David McMahan, NCA First Vice President
Roseann Mandziuk, NCA Second Vice President
Star Muir, NCA Immediate Past President