

## Statement from the Student Executive Board of the USC Caruso Catholic Center Regarding Racial Injustice

We, as members of the student executive board of the USC Caruso Catholic Center, have an obligation to ourselves, to our community, and to our God to be vocal in support of our Black brothers and sisters who have experienced extreme racism, persecution, and marginalization.

Black lives matter. They matter to us as friends, classmates, family members, professors, and role models. They matter as members of the Body of Christ in our Church. They are to be cherished. It is deeply horrifying to recognize the ways in which our nation has actively done the opposite. Black people have intrinsic value and meaning. The notion that their lives are less valued is a sin against God, His Church, and our shared humanity.

We are sincerely sorry for the time it has taken us to respond to the social justice crisis at hand. Our silence is inexcusable. Moving forward, we are dedicated to our commitment to solidarity, and to healing from injury our silence has caused. Pope Saint John Paul II presents the definition of solidarity, saying that it “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of others. It is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.” We will join you in the fight for the justice you deserve as children of God.

As a Catholic community, we recognize the beautiful teaching of our Church that life, loved into existence by God, is worth protecting and defending. Christ’s teaching for God’s people to be pro-life means that we must also be passionately anti-racist. Anti-racism calls us to do the necessary work of dismantling racist systems, and holding ourselves and others accountable for calling out racist conversations and stereotyping.

We stand in solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters. To do this, we acknowledge that the sin of racism exists in vast areas of our lives, beginning with the conscience of each person, and in the systems in which all people participate.

To eradicate the sin of racism is an important end in and of itself. The areas in which this sin exists are systemic and pervasive: these include, but are not limited to, the disproportionate rates at which Black lives are targeted through abortion, police brutality, mass incarceration, and the death penalty. This is an attack on the authentic teaching of Christ that encompasses respect for the dignity of life from conception to natural death, and respect for the lives of those threatened by racial injustice. We believe that these issues are an affront to the fullness of our commitment to life, and that one cannot be pro-life without working against racism.

A necessary way for us as Catholic Christians to move forward is to unpack the existence of racism in our own lives, in prayer, through our own examination of conscience. We believe the

following questions will begin this dialogue with Christ about how we can discover the presence of the sin of racism, beginning with ourselves.

We, as student leaders, have been reflecting on these questions, and we would like to invite you into this process. Janet Alia has helped in formulating some of these initial questions.

1. In what ways have I engaged in the rhetoric that promotes the stereotyping of Black and Brown people?
2. How have my views on Black and Brown people shifted since the death of George Floyd?
3. What can I do to better educate myself on the historical context of race in the country and community I exist in?

After a period of self examination, we encourage you to explore these questions with peers, family, and friends. Having an honest dialogue concerning race with our immediate circles is a great first step in being proactive in our fight against racism in all of its forms.

The Church is only as strong and robust as its members. Thanks be to God for the great dignity and value that each of our lives possess! We value diversity in our community as it better reflects the body of Christ, the universal nature of our Church, and our Catholic family in the world. If one member of our family suffers, we suffer with them. We must acknowledge this suffering wherever it exists.

Some leaders and members of our Church have been complacent in the commitment to fight racism and, at times, have perpetuated it. We refuse to be complacent any longer. We are in the process of compiling a list of helpful resources to help better educate ourselves and our community. We must gain new perspectives on the issue of racism. We hope to make this list available to you in the coming days.

We are also intentionally implementing action plans to make our community a safer place for Black students, including more opportunities for dialogue about how to be anti-racist, and the creation of small groups specifically for Catholic Trojans of color.

We encourage you to join us in truly living out our Catholic Social Teaching by making deliberate, conscious, and concrete steps to support our Black brothers and sisters.

In closing, we ask that you join us in prayer for the sin of racism to be cleansed from our community, nation, and world. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” - Ephesians 6:12

Yours in Christ,

Michael Uranga

Camille Hays

Isabel Torres

Britney Castillo

Carlo Santiago

Nicole Manalo

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Claire Robertson

Liam Costa

#### ADDENDUM

Our original statement was not intended to endorse the Black Lives Matter Network. Our word choice may have been misinterpreted as if we were aligning with the actual organization, which has principles that are not aligned with the Catholic Church. For example, we firmly believe in the structure of the nuclear family and that all families are in need of support. In our Catholic Family, our Black brothers and sisters have been publicly devalued, so we wish to communicate our solidarity with our Black family members. Therefore, we would like to reiterate our statement's original message. We will continue in our pursuit to be actively anti-racist.