



Southern Arizona Association for
the Education of Young Children

June 2, 2020

Dear SAZAEYC Membership and Community members,

As a black woman, it has taken me many days to wrestle with all of the feelings that have been brought to the surface due to the social unrest in our country. To say that my heart is utterly broken by the taking of another black life is to put it lightly. George Floyd was a human, due all the rights of an American citizen, those of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. However, George Floyd is the last publicized murder of black people just in the month of May, to list the black lives lost would be exhaustive. What we have witnessed as a nation, the unconscionable murder of an unarmed black man in [police custody](#), is unfortunately just the video evidence of 400 years of systemic oppression and disenfranchisement of black people.

Our nation is hurting. Our people are tired. We are dealing with social distancing practices which disproportionately affect those who are black, brown, indigenous and poor. When a government fails to support ALL of its citizens, you are bound to end up with frustrated masses yearning for their voices to be heard.

[A riot is the language of the unheard](#)...It is as necessary for me to be as vigorous in condemning the conditions which cause persons to feel that they must engage in riotous activities as it is for me to condemn riots. I think America must see that riots do not develop out of thin air. Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots (Dr. Martin Luther King's Other America Speech on April 14, 1967)

As early childhood educators, we can see the beginnings of this system. We are acutely aware that the systemic oppression of black children starts in preschool, at least 42 percent of preschool children suspended, are identified as African American boys. ([Stegelin, 2018](#)) African -American children attending state-funded pre kindergarten were approximately two times as likely to be expelled as Latino and white children and five times as likely to be expelled as Asian-American children.

I did not make this statement with an easy answer for the situation rapidly unfolding in front of us. What I can say is that this is a system deeply ingrained in our American society. To dissect out what needs to be removed for true equity to be achieved, we need to have [uncomfortable conversations](#). We need to dismantle the issues around why our early childhood educators are [overwhelmingly underpaid](#) for work that this pandemic has proven to everyone is crucial for our society to function. We need to dismantle the issues around why our black, brown and indigenous children have very few [literacy pieces](#) written by their black, brown and indigenous siblings. We need to dismantle the issues around why we seem to keep having [hashtags](#) honoring fallen black people yet we still deal with police brutality. We need to dismantle issues around why when we have a death of a black person we allow for white voices to tell our stories instead of [amplifying the voices of the disenfranchised](#).

My one hope is that though all of this, we find a way to hear our fellow Americans when they are hurting and do not turn a blind eye to injustices. I want to leave you with words from the late, great Maya Angelou;

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.*

With Kindness,

Cynnamon Woodberry, President

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

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sazaeyc.org

SAZAEYC promotes high quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.