



**A Greeting from RON VOGEL, DEAN  
Rongxiang Xu College of Health & Human Services**

As Dean of the Xu College of Health and Human Services, I am proud of the work that you have accomplished for our communities in very trying times. It is hard to maneuver all the pieces of our largest grant, but with the Principal Investigator (PI) Dr. Ledesma and Co-PI Dr. Munger, they flipped from a face-to-face model to the virtual world overnight. With the support of the faculty and staff, the transition was a collective effort that succeeded. Four months ago, I would have said it would be impossible, but you all worked from your hearts, and I want to thank you for your courage and commitment. Providing services in alternative modes is not an easy task, and I applaud what you have been able to accomplish. With SARS Cov-2 (Covid19) and the discontent and anger we have witnessed in the last few weeks, it can be depressing, dampen your spirits, and be emotionally draining. We have been through difficult times before, and out of the ashes will come change and peace. As ambassadors for health care, your role is incredibly important, and your services desperately needed. Take heart knowing that you are agents of change that impact the lives of so many. Keep up the great work!

Dean Ron Vogel



ECHO-LDPP is designed to address oral health disparities in communities that experience multiple inequalities and demonstrate amazing strengths and capacities. We recognize that “contexts” include the social, political and historical conditions that give rise to persistent disparities in communities. ECHO-LDPP commits to building and strengthening relationships with community partners to nurture the healthy growth and development of all. Our work is informed by approaches that respect the strengths and cultures of families and communities and that demonstrate partnership, hope, caring and compassion. In this challenging moment, we renew our commitment to service and to caring.

**Words from Our Elders:**

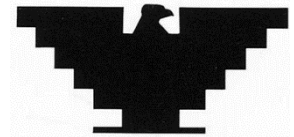
*I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.



*We can't let people drive wedges between us...because there's only one human race.*

Dolores Huerta



**A Letter to the Comadre**

Dear Comadre,

I'm writing to you as the sound of helicopters outside for the second night in a row. I am experiencing grief and hopelessness regarding the current events surrounding the murder of George Floyd. I have been following the media regarding his murder, the lack of justice for his death and the protests turned riots in response.

I feel stuck under an avalanche of emotions: sorrow, for the lives lost to police brutality; anger, for the broken system that continues to deny the black community justice; scared, for the future of our vulnerable communities within our cities; exhaustion, from reviewing resources, petitions, making phone calls to administration and consuming the images on social media; guilty, for my privilege that creates the gap where inequities exist; unsure, of how to respectfully advocate for the black community. As someone who actively works within the communities of Los Angeles, I serve, see and hear the black community. I want to be an ally and support a movement to reach justice and equity. I wish to take the necessary steps to genuinely stand in



solidarity with the community of Los Angeles against racism, police brutality and systemic oppression.

But where to begin? I would like to offer further support in addition to researching resources for donations, petitions and contact details for officials. This is my first time navigating advocacy and seeking justice. How can I help my black brothers and sisters be heard? Sincerely,  
Rising Ally



Dear Rising Ally,

When we live in societies that have disparities of every kind, when there is income inequality and when social contexts sustain institutionalized disadvantage, actions to seek justice will emerge. Trauma is a wound and in your words, I read that your heart is wounded by the events of recent days and historical contexts. I also read that you want/need to take action. This is mature and it indicates your sense of responsibility to your community and those who have suffered as a result of systematic disparities.

You have identified some of the thoughts, feelings and conditions that overwhelm you, and you have also mobilized yourself to take action. These are critically important first steps. And, our world is blessed by your sense of responsibility, your desire to help, your caring heart and your desire to work for justice. There are some things to consider as works to create a more just and caring world. The decision to engage in advocacy and action is influenced by internal and external factors. As you note, it is important to practice “news hygiene” (limit exposure to media and news) as chronic exposure to the stressor keeps the body in a hypervigilant state that can be unhealthy.

As you move forward, it will be helpful to develop deeper knowledge about the historical and social conditions that gave birth to and that continue to support unjust conditions. This knowledge helps to develop deeper understanding of the roots and of the strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness. In addition to knowledge, your decisions about “*what to do*” are informed by your values and your role models. What values guide you and what values guide the work of community elders, leaders and activists that you admire and respect? What words of wisdom and advice from these elders, leaders and activists inspire, guide and comfort you? What advocacy strategies that you have witnessed and that are proposed are consistent with your values and commitments? You have multiple roles

as an individual and as a young professional, and you can be mindful about the “lines” that cross and divide your roles. For example, as an individual you might engage in strategies that are limited by your professional role.



When one is overwhelmed by social, personal and historical events (pandemics, curfews, natural disasters), we are often comforted when we meet, converse, share and work with people. Your commitment and interest in working with others and in developing collective strategies to promote justice for all is an example of hope and faith. When we look across human history, we see many struggles for peace, justice and survival and we witness the efforts of people working with unity, love and caring for a more just world. I think about the words of Oren Lyons, who is a Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Seneca Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy:

*Even though you and I are in different boats, you in your boat and we our canoe, we share the river of life. What befalls me befalls you. And downstream, downstream in this river of life, our children will pay for our selfishness, for our greed, and for our lack of vision.*

I hope that you explore *what you can do* and that you will be guided by hope and a loving heart and most importantly, that you remember to take care of yourself, as well. Si se puede!

