



American Planning Association
California Chapter

June 16, 2020

Creating Great Communities for All

Let's Break the White Silence

I am heartened by the outpouring of solidarity and support expressed for the Black community by diverse groups and entities in the Planning profession in the wake of the brutal murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. I am also excited to see sparks of interest in understanding systemic racism within the white community. The Planning profession, at the very least, is complicit in perpetuating the structures of racism based on white supremacy. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black communities is a direct result of many planning policy decisions that have had the effect of sequestering the Black community in redlined areas, compromising their air and water quality, and providing unequal access to health and transportation services, to name a few. The APA California Board has developed webpages devoted to [Racial Justice and Social Equity Resources](#) that includes lists of works addressing issues of different types of inequities. This also includes the APA National Statement on [Righting the Wrongs of Racial Inequality](#) and the APA California Chapter [President's Message](#).

As you read about and/or refresh your understanding of systemic racism and learn how we in our Planning profession have contributed to its structure, it is clear the time has come for action. As planners it is also our ongoing responsibility to our profession, and to the communities we serve, to follow the principles enshrined in National APA's document [Planning for Equity Policy Guide](#). It is no longer enough to be an advocate standing silently on the sidelines. It is time to break the silence at dinner tables, at office tables, at managers' tables, in closed sessions with Council members, in schools and pretty much wherever your daily professional and personal life intersects with people.

You can act by increasing representation of planners so they better reflect the communities they represent, by training employees in implicit bias that impacts the decisions (professional and personnel) we make every day, and by sponsoring work and events geared towards making inclusive and just communities.

The structure of systemic racism that was created intentionally will require long, sustained and deliberate effort to dismantle and replace it with a system that takes the needs and the interests of marginalized communities into account. It is only when we address the calls of the most disenfranchised that we can be certain that the needs of all are being served.

I am confident that we will sustain this energy next year, the year after that, until the time when the APA California Board no longer needs a position called Vice President for Diversity and Equity.

Sincerely,

Miroo Desai

APA California

Vice President for Diversity and Equity