

Renegade Roundup



Six days after

May 31, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I have been meaning to write since Tuesday, but did not know where to begin. In the meantime, I have been in conversations with some of you as well as members of our community and there is an emerging plan to create a BC space (virtual in our COVID-19 context) to find a way forward.

Yesterday, at the prompting of a colleague I decided to pen a Renegade Roundup six days after the death of George Floyd.

May 25, 2020, Memorial Day -- At 8:24 p.m. George Floyd stopped moving.

George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man died on Monday, Memorial Day, while he was pinned to the ground, face down, in an unlawful knee-to-throat chokehold by a police officer.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/26/us/minneapolis-police-man-died.html?referringSource=articleShare>, NY Times published May 26, 2020)



It's poignant that on Memorial Day we honor the sacrifices of American soldiers who fought and died defending our country and our rights – rights that we hold to be equal for all, and rights that, in America at least, we name and defend.

The public reaction to George Floyd's killing has been forceful, spontaneous, across the political spectrum, and coast-to-coast (<https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/george-floyd-protests-05-30-20/index.html>, CNN May 30, 2020)

What is most striking to me are the voices that bear witness that George Floyd's tragic death is far from an isolated incident, but is instead part of a long history. As another colleague texted me - "horrific and common".

Some of that long history, with enough healing time and distance, we are now proud of, and claim as our own.

1819: Araminta Ross (Harriett Tubman) was born and grew up as a slave and was subject to whipping as a child. Tubman is now celebrated as a hero for her bravery in saving the lives of slaves. Dr. Ron Kean, faculty emeritus, composed music narrating the story of Harriet Tubman that was performed by the BC Chamber singers directed by Dr. Jen Garrett. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_I304SA1W0.

Sep 22, 1862: President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”

June 19, 1865 -- Black Fourth of July.

Two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation by Lincoln, the last state of Texas was informed that “in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.”

John Legend performs Lift Every Voice and Sing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k0xz6mKCJM>

Dec 1, 1955 – Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat on a crowded bus to a white passenger.

In 1967, Martin Luther King gave a speech titled “The Other America” where he said “A riot is the language of the unheard.” As Reese Walters of WUSA9.com recently pointed out, King followed that statement with a less often quoted question: “What is it that America has failed to hear?”



I believe that in the 50 years since King asked this question we have made enormous progress that we can and should be proud of. But we need to hear what George Floyd’s Memorial Day death – and our national reactions to it – are saying. It is a long and painful history, which makes it harder to hear. It is a dark and confusing time, which makes it harder to see how to move forward. But as Bakersfield College Renegades, we owe it to our community, to our veterans, and we each owe it to George Floyd, to join together, listen with humility, and to bring light that can illuminate the way ahead. #LightACandle

What BC is planning?

Under the leadership of Steven Watkin, Paula Parks, and Tommy Tunson, BC is planning a series of events around June 19th, Black independence day.



If you are interested in participating please email me at president@bakersfieldcollege.edu.

BC's Core Value of Diversity reads:

Diversity:



We insist that diversity be valued and promoted, recognizing that multiple perspectives lead to a better education and knowledge of the world; listening and witnessing different experiences helps us to understand and contextualize power and privilege related to gender, race, class, religion, disability, and sexuality in terms of access and barriers to resources and opportunities.

*Lift ev'ry voice and sing
'Til earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'til victory is won*

We are BC!

With much sadness, warmth, and Renegade Pride,
sonya

[See all issues of Renegade Roundup online](#)