

**President's Brief Remarks**

**Dedication of Black Student Alliance, BLM Mural**

**Sept. 21, 2020; 6:00p.m.**

Greetings EMU Community. Welcome special guests from the city of Hburg—**Mayor Deanna Reed** (also an EMU trustee); Vice-mayor, **Sal Romero**, Interim police chief, **Gabriel Camacho**.

What a beautiful day to rededicate ourselves to the peace and justice values that are core to who we are as a community of learners at EMU.

We have high standards at EMU around diversity, equity and inclusion. Our mission calls us to “Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.” Our new vision statement inspires us “to open new pathways of access and achievement for all students who aspire to be unifying leaders.”

What a beautiful day to stand in support and solidarity with the EMU Black Student Alliance (BSA) and “Black Lives Matter”—a movement that began 7 years ago for non-violent civil disobedience in protest of racially motivated violence against black people. The movement is surging because racism is surging. The pandemic has exposed a novel pathogen and a not so novel prejudice—that has spread like wild fire this summer. As communities have turned out to support their brothers and sisters of color, they hold signs that remind us: “Racism is the virus.” And “Say Their Name.”

Thank you to our students who are leading the way—creatively and courageously—on so many diversity initiatives at EMU. And specifically, I want to affirm our BSA co-chairs, **Merry Yirga and JD Richardson** for organizing this BLM mural dedication project—a lot of planning and coordination—and flexibility—not to mention artistry---made more challenging by COVID safety rules. And I am also most appreciative for BSA for working with our COVID Health teams this summer in lending us their Barbershop space as a COVID testing site this semester.

It is no coincidence that we gather to support the founding principle of BLM by dedicating our students’ art work—a mural. Art speaks to us in special ways—it draws people together, it bridges differences, and it invites healing.

As we reflect on the message of this mural, may we be instructed to live more faithfully as a beloved community embracing the grand diversity of God’s people!