

A Solidarity and Action Statement

by members of the SSFD community



June 15, 2020

As members of the SSFD community at Arizona State University, we thank President Crow for the invitation to explore “new ideas, new designs and new concepts” for how to continue to advance ASU’s charter invested in measuring the university “not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed.” We are in solidarity with Black students, staff, faculty and all Black people globally who continue to experience state-sanctioned violence. We oppose all forms of police brutality and unequivocally condemn the killings of Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Dion Johnson, George Floyd, Nina Pop, David McAtee, Ahmaud Arbery and all Black people who have lost their lives to anti-Black violence. We stand against white supremacists who continue to practice a longstanding history of infiltration tactics to undermine struggles for racial justice and further subject Black people to police brutality¹. We write this statement inspired by the radical praxis of Black feminists, who like Audre Lorde, remind us that “your silence will not protect you.”²

Recent protests across the country have been spurred by the deaths of Black people at the hands of police. This is, however, not a new phenomenon. The deaths of George Floyd in Minnesota, Tony McDade in Florida, David McAtee in Kentucky, Dion Johnson in Arizona, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky and many others who have not received media attention are part of a long history of police violence against Black communities across the United States. Black people in the U.S. are at increased risk of experiencing police violence and are more likely to die as a result of police use of force than non-Black people. In 2019, Black people made up 24% of those killed by police, despite being just 13% of the U.S. population. This is also a local issue in Arizona, where Black people make up 4% of the population and 9% of those killed by police. Over the life-course, Black men in America have a one in 1,000 risk of being killed by police while white men face a risk of approximate one in 3,000. Black men are not the only victims of police violence, as Black women’s incarceration rates have skyrocketed in recent decades, and as the deaths of Black trans people, like Nina Pop in Missouri and Black children like Tamir Rice in Ohio and Aiyana Jones in Michigan, at the hands of police demonstrate. Black women also face an elevated risk of police-involved mortality, though lower than that of Black men. Anti-Blackness, in all its forms, are a cornerstone of white supremacy, the ideology that white people and white norms are superior to Black people and other races. This ideology has implications across all domains of Black people’s lives. As social scientists who specialize in social and family dynamics, we recognize that anti-Blackness, and its manifestation in racist policing, mass incarceration and state-sanctioned murders, is a reproductive justice³ issue that prevents Black families from raising their children in safe and healthy conditions.

1 See Haas, Jeffrey. 2010. *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books for a historical perspective, and news stories such as [this source](#) for contemporary accounts.

2 Lorde, Audre. 2007. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*. Berkeley: Crossing Press.

3 Reproductive Justice, a human rights concept coined by Black women in 1994, refers to the right to have children, not have children, and parent in healthy and safe conditions. As an intersectional concept and social movement, reproductive justice reflects the needs and standpoints of women of color, specifically, and communities of color, generally.

State-sanctioned violence also occurs in other forms that contribute to broad structural inequalities. The over-policing and constant surveillance of Black communities has led to a disproportionate incarceration rate for Black Americans, and may permanently alter their health. These forms of anti-Black racism and violence have existed alongside the lynching and extrajudicial murder of Black people by white people, including Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, Renisha McBride in Michigan and Trayvon Martin in Florida as part of a broad institutionalization of violence against Black people that frequently happens with impunity. Protests against anti-Black racism and police brutality have taken place across all 50 states and many countries around the world. The fact that Black communities are protesting in large numbers in the midst of a pandemic which also disproportionately affects Black people is noteworthy. Where data is disaggregated by race, rates of COVID-19 mortality are more than twice as high for Black people than for white people. Where cases have been mapped out, it has been clear that primarily Black neighborhoods have borne the brunt of COVID-19 infections and mortalities. The deaths of people like Rana Zoe Mungin, along with existing research, reflect centuries of white supremacy, segregation and systemic racism. Black workers make up a large proportion of those deemed essential workers – about one of every six front-line workers in fields like health care, grocery stores, and public transit; Black people experience greater racial discrimination in the health care system and systemic racism leads to greater likelihood of experiencing co-morbidities that make COVID-19 more likely to be deadly. The economic fallout of the pandemic will continue to exacerbate racial inequalities in employment and income. In light of these realities, we echo statements by infectious disease experts that “protests against systemic racism, which foster the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 on Black communities and also perpetuate police violence, must be supported.”

We have an obligation as social scientists to challenge anti-Blackness and we present a call to action to non-Black people to do so as well. We understand that engaging in discussions of racism is often uncomfortable for non-Black people, but we urge scholars to lean into the transformative possibility of that discomfort and prioritize Black lives over the comforts of silence. Any attempt to seriously contend with the pervasive reality of global anti-Blackness requires first acknowledging that the U.S. is a settler colonial state whose foundation rests on the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the chattel enslavement of Black people. Speaking up when your loved ones and colleagues engage in racist rhetoric is an incredibly important step in collectively unlearning racist logics, therefore, it is imperative for non-Black people to leverage our position in the service of Black liberation.

There are many important ways for SSFD and the university as a whole to make tangible changes that demonstrate a commitment to affirming Black people and social justice. We do not propose this as an exhaustive list, but merely as a starting point for moving forward:

1. Following other universities across the country, work with Black faculty, staff and students to eliminate police presence on campuses and establish community-based solutions such as individuals specifically trained in de-escalation.
2. Increase the number of Black faculty, administrators and staff across ASU.

3. Recruit more Black undergraduate and graduate students, as well as postdoctoral fellows and provide full funding packages to help support Black student success and retention.
4. Resolve race and gender pay disparities among faculty, staff and students.
5. Redesign courses that showcase the contributions of Black intellectuals across discipline.
6. Recognize and celebrate Black excellence through awards for Black faculty, students, administrators and staff.
7. Re-evaluate current mentorship practices to ensure that Black students have more opportunities to receive quality training with equitable financial compensation in an anti-racist environment.
8. Prevent and eliminate retaliation against students, staff, non-tenure track faculty and any other member of SSFD community in a vulnerable position who acts as a whistleblower and denounces anti-Black racist incidents on campus.
9. Provide funding to organize teach-ins on campus about anti-Blackness, police brutality and protests that work with, center and properly compensate Black people.
10. Commit to essential support resources and partner with at least one organization by the end of 2020-2021 academic year that will improve the quality of Black student life and reduce the disproportionate labor that Black faculty do to meet these essential needs, such as hiring full-time Black therapists grounded in historicized racism on campus.
11. Support community organizations that work against police brutality and anti-racism and provide essential services to Black people.
12. Engage in solutions that do not place the burden of excavating anti-Blackness in university governance, teaching and mentorship on Black faculty and graduate students who are already underrepresented and overly burdened with this emotional labor.
13. Provide institutional support toward research on anti-Blackness, racism and racial/ethnic inequalities
14. Shift from a deficit-based narrative to a strength-based narrative centered on a healing framework that recognizes hardships and needs as well as strengths.
15. Read or re-read the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Marlon Bailey, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Stuart Hall, The Combahee River Collective, Rashad Shabazz, Cedric J. Robinson, Angela Y. Davis, Eleanor Seaton, Ruth Wilson Gilmore,

Frantz Fanon, Scott Brooks, Orlando Patterson, Aimé Césaire, Ersula Ore, James Baldwin, Nikki Giovanni, Robin D.G. Kelley, Sonia Sanchez, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison and many others who have examined the contours of racism across time and space.

We demand that non-Black people, white and non-white alike, stop telling Black people how they should feel, think and act regarding anti-Blackness. We acknowledge that an important aspect of recognizing Black people's humanity is supporting their right to express their anger, rage, grief and fear — free of judgment, surveillance and punishment from non-Black people and social institutions. We author this statement with the recognition that we have much to learn and much work to do to affirm Black people. We are committed to continuing this lifelong personal and systemic process.

Prison abolitionist, Angela Y. Davis, powerfully stated that “In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.” As scholars who occupy various forms of privileged positions, we ask that all academics and institutions publicly condemn all manifestations of anti-Black racism and engage in institutional changes that demonstrate that Black lives matter.

In Solidarity,

Rocío R. García
Cassandra Cotton
Connor M. Sheehan
Nilda Flores-Gonzalez
José M. Causadias
Masumi Iida
Eleanor Seaton
Melissa Woodward
Claudia Vega
Abigail Gabriel
Ronaë Matriano
Mary E. Doyle
Kimberly Updegraff
Casey Sechler
Kari Visconti
Karissa Greving Mehall
Ana María Méendez G
Rebecca M. B. White
Manuela Jimenez
Dawn DeLay
Ryan Field
Scott N. Brooks
Robert M. Tovar
Jenn Haskin
Stephanie Thibault
Madeline Parde
Stacie Foster
Lisa Barth
Michelle Pasco

Jodi Swanson
Annabelle Atkin
Carol Martin
Roy Levy
Rick Fabes
Holly P. O'Rourke
Laura Hanish
Kevin M. Korous
Justin Jager
Annabella Gallagher
Casandra Salgado
Clarissa Abidog
Chris Burns
Bridget Granville Seeley
Cindy Faith Miller
Stacey Flores
Monique Cathern
Gary Ladd
Sonya Xinyue Xiao
Cory Gassner
Sofia Depner
Tracy L. Spinrad
Marilyn Thompson
Brandon Clifford
John Keeney
Karina Cahill
Bev Carlsen-Landy
Ashley Jimenez Fraser
Jamie Lopez

Khaerannisa Cortes
Leigh McLean
Luz Hernandez
Brittany Alexander
Stefanie Martinez-Fuentes
Crystal Bryce
Rebecca Sandefur
Monica McDermott
Janniqua A. Dawkins
Brandon Yoo
Courtney Romley
Megan Costa
Monica Tsethlikai
Kelli Ramirez
Becky Ladd
Nancy Landers
Stephen Kulis
Jingyi Xu
Daye Son
Alexander Kurz
Krista Puruhito
Kamryn Morris
Jayley Janssen
Aubrey Hoffer
Sabina Low
Jennifer Harrison
Richard Fey
Wes Jackson