

### Statement of Support:

We, faculty members of Fresno State's Africana Studies Program in the College of Social Sciences, write this letter to state without equivocation our frustration with the treatment of the Black community by state-supported law enforcement, but also including vigilante brutality and murders yet to be fully investigated. Hence, we denounce the killings of Black women such as Alberta Spruill, Kathryn Johnston, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Renisha McBride, Tanisha Anderson, Atatiana Jefferson, Sandra Bland, Charleena Lyles, and Breonna Taylor (to name a few), and Black transpeople such as Tony McDade, unjustly killed by police officers. Or Black men such as George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Rayshard Brooks, and many more who have been killed at a rate of 200-300 per year by police officers. This list does not even include those killed by vigilantes such as the 9 killed by a white supremacist Dylann Roof in a Charleston church shooting or Robert Fuller and Malcolm Harsch, recently found hung from trees in California (cases still under investigation). We find ourselves in a watershed moment of heightened awareness of the need for anti-racist activism and consciousness-raising to resist white supremacy and overcome anti-Black violence and racial injustice.

The Fresno State Africana Studies Program (AFRS) is proud to be part of a legacy of student protest and activism that began the disciplines of Ethnic Studies and Africana Studies within the California State University system over fifty years ago. Inspired by the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Consciousness movements, the Africana Studies Program is purposeful in its mission to help students learn and understand the meaning and effects of institutionalized racism, racial stratification, and social conflict in relation to the Black experience. As we have done since our founding in 1969, the Africana Studies Program at Fresno State is committed to confronting, challenging, and defending the humanity and dignity of Black people worldwide through our teaching, research, and service. The Africana Studies Program is foundational to helping all students and the community address anti-racism every day in our classes (not just when it's trending) and to understand the conditions that made it possible for an innocent Black man to be lynched before a crowd in broad daylight in the street on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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Africana Studies plays a critical role in teaching our students and community why protest is necessary, and what it will take to build an inclusive and just society for all.

As America experiences one of the largest expressions of anti-racist resistance in its history, the Africana Studies Program at Fresno State boldly encourages students and the community to join us in exposing and dismantling the racist paradigms, conditions, and conduct used to promote, rationalize, and tolerate white supremacy by participating in one or more of the following:

- taking an Africana studies course at Fresno State
- completing a major, minor, or Certificate-- in the Africana Historical Experience (with the Department of History) or Certificate in Racial Understanding (with the Department of Social Work)
- attending an AFRS sponsored event, symposium, lecture, or exhibit
- joining and/or supporting Black organizations, associations, and businesses that honor Black culture, close the wealth gap, and serve the entire community

In Africana Studies, Black culture matters, Black history matters, Black elders and Black youth matter, Black love and Black joy matters. Black Lives Matter activism is part of a historical continuum within the same stream as Africana Studies that recognizes the necessity for activism and struggle to resist the erasure and marginalization of Black people. As faculty and community members we recognize and appreciate the difficult task of coalition-building and movement-building, and we welcome deeper and broader collaboration with all of our university and community partners. To that end, we endorse the collective statement below created by faculty in the College of Social Sciences as well as the anti-racist and social justice demands made by our faculty union CFA linked below:

[https://www.calfac.org/sites/main/files/cfa\\_arsj\\_demands\\_in\\_wake\\_of\\_anti-black\\_racism\\_violence\\_and\\_murder\\_final.pdf](https://www.calfac.org/sites/main/files/cfa_arsj_demands_in_wake_of_anti-black_racism_violence_and_murder_final.pdf)

## Statement from COSS faculty

We, the undersigned faculty members in the College of Social Sciences at Fresno State, write this letter to express our anger and frustration at the continued state-supported violence against vulnerable communities and protestors.

We condemn the egregious killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Isiah Murrietta-Golding at the hands of police officers, the racially motivated murder of Ahmaud Arbery, and the racially threatening treatment of Christian Cooper. These names are just a few in a long history of racism and injustice against Black and Latinx communities that often go uncharged and unprosecuted.

We condemn the all too common violent reactions of law enforcement and endorsement of this violence by public officials in response to ongoing protests across the US.

As social scientists, our teaching, research, and service contribute to applied knowledge about racial inequities and how to best eradicate them. We give students the tools to see and attack racism, and to become better lawyers, judges, public officials, educators, victim advocates, law enforcement, voters, social activists, parents, and other civically engaged members of our communities. The development and support of anti-racist curricula is an absolute necessity. These curricula equip students with the tools to understand and dismantle the individual, interpersonal, and institutionalized forms of racism that caused these tragedies. We are committed to building a community of scholars and activists devoted to dismantling white supremacy and combatting all forms of racial injustice.

We support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and similar efforts that promote the well-being of the Black community. Born of the struggle against police brutality, BLM addresses deeply entrenched racial inequalities and injustices, including mass incarceration, voter suppression, and educational inequities. We will not be silent nor complicit in accepting the status quo.

We acknowledge the crucial role of first responders to the COVID-19 pandemic who are disproportionately made up of African Americans and communities of color. Consequently, the African American community is dying at more than double the rate of white Americans. We recognize many police departments' actions to promote accountability and improved community relations on a daily basis. We do not endorse violent attacks on any individuals.

We call on our local leaders and University administration to show, not only in words, but in action, that our Black communities, students, and faculty should and must be supported. We urge the university to invest in our historic Africana Studies Program, one of the longest-standing programs of its kind in the entire CSU system, in addition to other Ethnic Studies departments and programs housed in the College of Social Sciences, that do the challenging but necessary work of anti-racist pedagogy. Students look to Africana Studies and Ethnic Studies to understand their own experiences with systemic inequalities and to analyze discrimination that directly impacts their own lives. Africana Studies and Ethnic Studies curricula offer productive spaces for exploring solutions to the difficult challenges made more visible by the tumultuous events of the last week. We know that education is key to changing the systems that allow inequalities and injustices to

perpetuate. Among other efforts to improve racial climate on college campuses, it is imperative that campus leaders continue to support ethnic studies courses as a graduation requirement, including the current bill AB1460, thus challenging the erasure of anti-racist theorization and practice as well as the communities that produced it. Fresno State must address the systemic causes for the decline in African American student enrollment; over the last ten years African American enrollment has declined by fifty percent. We challenge all departments at Fresno State to continue to support hiring faculty of color, Black scholars, and experts in the area of African American culture, history, and experience.

To our students, we find hope in Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor's instructive words: "Always ally yourself with those on the bottom, on the margins, and at the periphery of the centers of power. And in doing so, you will land yourself at the very center of some of the most important struggles of our society and our history."

In partnership with our students and the greater Fresno community we are committed to the ongoing work of fostering anti-racist initiatives and understanding the complex legacy of systemic racism and anti-Black discrimination.

*(This statement does not necessarily represent the views of all faculty in the College of Social Sciences nor does the absence of a signature below mean other faculty in COSS do not support this statement in whole or part.)*

Signed,

The Africana Studies Program

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