

THE AFRICANA STUDIES PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CONDEMNS GEORGE FLOYD'S HOMICIDE

Reflecting on the vicious and tragic end to the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, we the Core Faculty of the Africana Studies Program at the University of Tennessee strongly condemn ongoing blatant acts of white supremacist violence that result in the deaths of Black peoples. This is a moment of national turmoil at the center of which is a cry for unity and clarity, a cry that also says, "enough is enough." As faculty whose research and teaching center on the Black experience globally, we push back against violence even as we reflect on and work to understand the historical and contemporary reasons for the nationwide movements, protests, and marches for justice. The recent incidents and ensuing global reactions to them provide us not only with opportunities for indignation but also provide us with a chance to reflect on our own values and principles as researchers, teachers, and as human beings and the huge responsibility that we continue to bear as we strive to educate our students in a way that creates a new kind of consciousness and understanding, one that can only benefit and develop our campus community in a very positive way.

Our goal is always to provide forums for strong healthy engagement for our students so that when they graduate, they leave the University with a strong core of knowledge, a clear sense of what justice means, a sense of social commitment, and confidence. This is the biggest mobilization for justice and it is being driven by many young people. We support their endeavors, stand with them, and cheer their willingness to risk their lives in the streets and speak out against such ongoing incidents (even as we worry deeply for their safety). They have come to recognize the trauma and damaging impact that the continuing sanctioned police violence against Black peoples has on us all and its long term burden on their young lives. As faculty we bear that burden too and we can only stand by them as they work to make a better world for us all.

The Africana Studies Program categorically denounces this senseless loss of life. It is too destructive and it is tearing us apart. We must join from all levels (students, faculty, staff, and campus leadership) to issue strong and emphatic condemnation of such incidents, if we are going to send out messages that consistently sustain a campus climate that is welcoming and supportive for everyone. We can, through our words and actions, model what we truly stand for and see it as our duty to vehemently condemn acts of violence. Speaking out against such actions is just the first but essential step in countering that extremism and taking up the necessary work of racial justice.

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