

Dear University at Buffalo Community,

Over the last few weeks, we have seen multiple demonstrations occur across the country in relation to the murder of George Floyd. What is important to understand is that this is just the latest in a pattern of deadly force used by law enforcement against Black people in this country. Those protesting are also outraged about the recent killings of Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade, and the extrajudicial slaying of Ahmaud Arbery—none of which have led to criminal prosecutions. Black people in this country are completely exhausted with trying to explain to others that their lives matter just as much as everyone else's. We are exhausted with explaining what it's like to wake up every day and consider the fact that any of the daily activities that everyone participates in—such as driving, walking, sleeping, and jogging—can potentially lead to their death at any given moment.

Right now, more than ever before, it is important that we as a community come together. There is not only a pandemic due to COVID-19, but as someone mentioned recently, there is also a State of Emergency for all African Americans. The Graduate students in the American Studies Department and the Undergraduate students in Transnational Studies—including those in African and African American Studies, Caribbean and Latin American Studies, and Hispanic and Latinx Studies—are now, and have always been, committed to educating students and learning about shared connections across boundaries, and during this period, even in the midst of this uncertainty, please look critically and see that there is much more that unites us than divides us. Please stay safe and we look forward to when we are all on campus together again.

Sincerely,

James Ponzio (II), PhD Candidate  
American Studies  
TA/Instructor  
University at Buffalo