



We are the faculty, staff and students in the African and African American Studies program in the Department of Transnational Studies at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. We condemn the continuing oppression of Black people in the United States of America. We stand with all peoples, groups and institutions protesting the state of race relations in this country. We join in a clarion call now heard on the streets across the nation that enough is enough and that the time is now for social equality for all peoples in the United States. We assert that, in all their human beauty and pride, Black Lives Matter.

While we note that the spark for these latest rounds of protest was the recent brutal killing of George Floyd at the knee of a member of the Minneapolis police force, we also know that the demonstrations are the expressions of a wariness going back to the founding of the nation by Black people and their allies from carrying the heavy weight of oppression and from social exclusion and marginalization. The list of names of those Black, Brown and Native peoples who have died from state violence, of those who have been incarcerated needlessly or denied opportunities for social and personal advancement, is too long to be named here. But in issuing this statement we honor all the fallen over the years and seek to encourage and inspire all who are fighting for social, economic and political change and to bring an end to all forms of systemic violence.

We in the African and African American Studies program have always been involved in this struggle to rectify the way the society sees and treats people of color. Because we know that Buffalo, NY has always been central to this national discussion, we have always sought to be the place where leaders in the civil rights movement would find a home to speak, study, research and live out their experiences to the fullest. When our program started 50 years ago, it was a pioneer in Black Studies in the United States as part of the evolution of the civil rights movement. It was a model, particularly at the University at Buffalo, for educational programs for other peoples of color, including those in Native American studies, the Caribbean and Latin American Studies, Latinx Studies, Asian American Studies, Polish Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and American Studies. Ultimately African and African American studies was folded with these other programs under an umbrella Department of Transnational Studies, which is now the home for diversity and the quest for social justice at our university.

We are proud of this legacy of fighting oppression and for bringing together peoples of different ethnicities, cultures and social orientations in a quest for the achievement of full citizenship as the recognition of human dignity for all. In raising our voice in support of all protest against oppression and injustice, and in particular in asserting loudly that Black Lives Matters, we commit to making our program and the university central to this struggle. We will not stop until equality for all is achieved across the nation and in Africa and its Diaspora.

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