



**Statement of Solidarity with AFR, LLS, and BSU
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY**

June 8, 2020

Standing in solidarity with John Jay College of Criminal Justice's [Africana Studies Department \(AFR\)](#), [Latin American and Latinx Studies Department \(LLS\)](#), and [Black Student Union \(BSU\)](#), we are outraged at the killing of George Floyd by a white police officer and outraged at the police violence in response to protests in NYC and across the country. Floyd's death adds to a long history of state-sanctioned killing of Black people, including, most recently, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade. #BlackLivesMatter. #BlackTransLivesMatter. #SayHerName.

As a Gender Studies Program within a criminal justice college setting where 52% of students identify as Hispanic / Latino, 16% as Black / African American, and 11% as Asian, we must reflect and act on what it means to be complicit in the rooting of structural racism in higher education, the criminal justice system, the militarization of policing, the growing carceral state, and the racialized heteropatriarchy embedded in our curriculum, in our collegial connections, and in ourselves.

In the United States, the field of Gender, Women's, and Sexualities Studies (GWSS) was largely founded by Black feminist women who were critical of violence in all its forms, including police brutality against people of color, especially Black youth. Self-described "black, lesbian, feminist, mother, warrior, poet" Audre Lorde was one of those founders, and her work is central to GWSS courses everywhere today. Little known is the fact that Lorde taught at John Jay College soon after its founding and then left after a John Jay student and police officer shot a 10-year-old Black boy, Clifford Glover, in the back, killing him, in Queens, NY in 1973 (See Alexis Pauline Gumbs' research on Black lesbian feminist scholars Audre Lorde and June Jordan in [The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent](#) (2014), p. 237-260). Arguably, Lorde could no longer reconcile working at the college with her own Black feminist politics. In a contemporary example of this legacy of Black feminist educational critique, Black feminist scholar Carmen Kynard [outlined her recent departure](#) from John Jay College over racism, sexism, and the colonial impulse of the college.

The [National Women's Studies Association](#) (NWSA), the GWSS professional organization, wrote in their statement on the protests against police violence:

"The racially coded language of looting and rioting rationalizes the use of military-style force by the state but fails to take into account the generations of corporate looting, labor theft from Black people, land theft from indigenous people, and the multiple forms of exploitation and expropriation upon which this country was built. (. . .) The current protests have grown out of festering rage and frustration around relentless police violence, economic deprivation, political marginalization, inadequate health care, and social isolation."

We join with NWSA and the fierce advocates for justice on our campus who express outrage and demand change for the life, safety, and well-being of Black people and Black communities. We call for fierce advocacy for social justice, for solidarity and care.





As a Gender Studies Program we recognize the specificity of George Floyd's life and death. We stand in solidarity with Black and Brown communities and participate in ways to find meaningful change. We acknowledge that there are important lessons about anti-Blackness, White supremacy, colonization, patriarchy, sexuality, gender, ability, citizenship, class, and power at play here. We use a critical feminist perspective to connect each of these social forces and advocate for change. We use an intersectional feminist perspective to center an analysis that begins with the killing of George Floyd. And we use a radical feminist perspective to call for a reimagining of John Jay College via the experience of Black and Brown students, staff, administrators, and faculty. Gender Studies is an activist-scholar endeavor that also interrogates violences and imagines new, equitable, visionary futures. To that end, we call on ourselves and on the John Jay College administration, departments, and other programs to identify and take actions about these inequities.

Still, centering injustice and inequality is not enough. Revolutionary change is not won through diversity and inclusion trainings that shore up compliance but do little to disembed anti-Blackness and racism. We must also insist on the centering of belonging, success, laughter, and excellence. And this must be done and understood through the lens of Black and Brown experience in our own country and beyond, in our own hallways, offices, centers, classrooms, and beyond.

We call upon you to contribute to new ways of being at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Reimagining John Jay College is not about making it legally safe (post pandemic). Reimagining John Jay College must be about correcting and alleviating things that have been known to cause harm. Reimagining John Jay College must be about honoring the experiences of students, staff, administrators, and faculty who are Black and Brown, identifying and eradicating barriers to success and happiness for these populations, and then developing an institution-wide wave of change that benefits all others. Reimagining John Jay College must be about building a place where Black and Brown people can belong, succeed, laugh, and excel. How will you help make this happen?

In Solidarity,

The Gender Studies Program Committee at John Jay College

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