



June 10, 2020.

Statement from the
Department of Global History
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

History department

*524 W 59th Street, 8th Fl.
New York City, NY 10019
T. 212.237.8827
F. 212.237.8830*

We, the members of the Department of Global History at John Jay College, write to join our voices in support of the statement by our LLS/AS colleagues. This statement condemns and denounces the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the countless African-American men and women who have been targeted systematically by anti-black racialized policies in the United States. We in the Department of Global History stand together in solidarity with our colleagues and send our deepest heartfelt condolences to the families of the innumerable innocent Black Americans who have been murdered by police forces across the country for decades.

We join our colleagues in speaking a truth:

“The nation-wide protests in reaction to the murder of George Floyd remind us that this is not just a problem in Minneapolis or Louisville; it is a problem for the entire United States. We acknowledge that police violence is rooted in the longstanding and unresolved legacy of a country founded on racial and economic inequality and anti-Blackness—a legacy of lands stolen from indigenous peoples, slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism, and Jim Crow that manifests itself in the racial, economic and political inequalities communities of color experience today in healthcare, education, employment, housing and the criminal justice system.”

U.S. history shows that the targeting and racial profiling of African Americans has a long precedent rooted in slavery and institutionalized in post-Reconstruction state violence against entire black communities, including among many others lynchings and genocidal events such as the 1921 Tulsa massacre. Anti-black state violence was codified during Jim Crow and created top-down government-driven residential apartheid through redlining.

Today the legacies of those policies are still evident and felt from Minneapolis, Minnesota, Florida, Staten Island, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles etc. There has been no region of the country that has escaped the systematic transgenerational targeting and killing of black people in the United States.

We, the Department of Global History at John Jay College, are in complete agreement with the points made by our LLS/AS colleagues and we too pledge to work together to:

“Call for justice for George Floyd and the countless other Black and Brown persons who have fallen prey to police violence and racially-motivated attacks. Work to educate and engage our college community in studying and understanding systemic racism and the history and present-day atrocities and indignities that befall people of color, as well as resistance to it, with a view to identifying solutions to address the scourge of racism on our society.

Redouble our efforts to collaborate and sponsor events that illuminate the ways in which historically, Black and Latinx communities have supported each other and overlap with each other in our quests for justice. Dedicate ourselves, through our teaching, scholarship, and activism, to explore ways to bring changes in the operations of the law and the criminal justice system to ensure justice and accountability, and ensure equal justice under the law regardless of one’s skin color, regardless of whether one wears a badge, and regardless of your economic, social and immigration status in this country. Work strenuously to seek to diversify graduate schools and law and support our college’s diverse student population.”

We also pledge to support our colleagues throughout the College, who in various ways are on the front lines of addressing the challenges that our students and their families face as people of color and/or undocumented persons who continue to suffer disproportionately the effects of Covid-19 along with systemic and structural racism.

The Department of Global History echoes support to two important items offered by LLS/AS:

“Call on leadership across John Jay College to remain conscious of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 pandemic on our racially and ethnically diverse student body and staff, and ensure that college policies and practices support their wellbeing, retention and academic success; Call on John Jay College and the City University of New York to not allow the diversity in our student population to be threatened, the efforts to diversify our faculty to be imperiled, and the important work of departments and programs focused on educating about race and ethnicity to be dismantled as casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic and budget cuts. Our college and our university should remain cognizant that, with every economic downturn and every health crisis, communities of color endure disproportionate burdens and setbacks to whatever gains have made over time. John Jay College and CUNY must resolve and take action to maintain diversity among students, advance diversity among the ranks of faculty and administrators, and support a diverse curricula and educational equity on our campus and campuses across the university.”

As professors at an HSI/MSI, we are keenly aware that our students bear the brunt of unjust policies. We will continue to be fierce advocates for our students; to protect and empower them through education and mentorship.

We believe that in the 21st century professors must be more than scholars. As educators, our mission is not only to help our students better understand the origins of the contemporary world, but to help train them to be agents of change—indeed to be fierce advocates for justice. We not only teach knowledge and train

students how to think, but hold that teaching is a noble profession. A vocation. And we as educators have the moral and ethical responsibility to mold the next generation.

More than ever these times call us to steer clear of neutrality and be intentional as educators. The George Floyd and Breonna Taylor murders, and social inequities highlighted by the Covid-19 epidemic, underscore the need to remind ourselves that as the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire said: “The educator has the duty of not being neutral.”

In solidarity,
Department of Global History.