

Statement on the Racial Crisis from UCLA Geography

June 3, 2020

We are horrified, we are saddened, and we are angry at the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery by police and white vigilantes. These murders, part of a recent tragic litany, are symptomatic of the historical and continuing mistreatment of Black people in the USA. At this same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how racial inequality intersects with class, leading to the disproportionate death of Black and brown people. The protests that have ensued are urging us to confront the violence of racism and how it manifests in the everyday lives of Black people and other people of color. However, they also reveal the urgency for building connections between us. As human beings, we all must participate in our collective wellbeing and future; we cannot shy away from the difficult work that this takes. We, the Faculty, Instructors and Staff of the UCLA Geography Department, stand with our students in solidarity with Black people across the nation and recognize this as a moment for us to begin to work together to support the struggles of people of color and to ensure that social justice is available to all.

Geographers are keenly aware of how processes of settler colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and its legacies have contributed to an unequal organization of the world and its resources. In our classes, students learn about how the world that we inhabit today is marked by these processes. Jim Crow segregation and redlining, for example, provide a backdrop for the endemic structural racism that still exists in this country. It also helps to explain so much of the inequality in terms of access to education and the disproportionate targeting of Black men and women by the police. A geographical and historical analysis lays bare the ugly fact that the premature deaths of Black people are not isolated incidents—they are systematic byproducts of a country that has not moved beyond structural racism and inequality.

In these times of national upheaval and suffering, it is important to remember that Black intellectuals, freedom-fighters, and cultural producers have constructed a robust tradition of envisioning freedom. We must look at the writings of the Black radical tradition for their elaborations on resilience. At the core of their writing is a desire to craft collectively a different kind of world, one that is not shackled by the violence of racism. As geographers who study the production of space, we are well prepared to help in this process. It is our task to help imagine and produce a different kind of world.

Students and members of our community, we stand with you now more than ever. We encourage you to reach out to us for support as you need it. But more importantly, we encourage all of us to continue caring for each other and to support one another.

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Resources for the UCLA Community

UCLA Resources for Racial Trauma - <https://equity.ucla.edu/know/resources-for-racial-trauma/>

UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion - <https://equity.ucla.edu/>

UCLA Counseling and Psychological Services - <https://www.counseling.ucla.edu/>