



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
264 HAINES HALL
BOX 91551
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1551

UCLA Sociology Faculty Statement on Black Lives Matter*

Faculty in the UCLA Department of Sociology unequivocally condemn the recent acts of racist violence against African Americans, another chapter in the long, sordid, and unacceptable history of anti-Black racism. We endorse calls for the prosecution of those who commit such violence, and we wholeheartedly support the protestors who have gone to the streets to press for racial justice. We stand with movement activists in thinking that public funds currently spent on prisons and the police should be sharply reduced; that the militarization of policing undermines the goal of protecting and serving society's members, particularly its most vulnerable; and that the monies currently spent on policing and incarceration would be far better spent on various social goods including housing, schools, health, mental health, food security, and job training.

As sociologists, we recognize that racism is more than simply the feelings of one person about another. Racism is at once structural and subconscious, institutional and intentional. It is maintained by things people do and by things they let happen. And it is deeply entrenched in our society and institutions, as it has been from the founding moment of our country.

Nonetheless, we are not alone in expressing our outrage over the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other Black victims of police violence. We stand with millions of Americans of all backgrounds who insist on the imperative of fundamental change, understanding their obligations to the lives extinguished by racial violence. We grieve for these lives, whether lost to police violence or to the structural inequalities that made so many Black Americans vulnerable to the ravages of COVID-19 and other health disparities.

Yet we see hopeful signs of a determination to break with the past in the diverse coalition of demonstrators who come together day after day to insist that Black Lives Matter. These protests are the latest episode in a centuries-long struggle for racial democracy. We are confident that history is being made in the streets.

The study of inequality is at the heart of our discipline, and sociological research seeks to document the institutional racism that afflicts American society and identify its many and deep-rooted sources. In so doing, the discipline continues in the visionary tradition of W.E.B. Du Bois – whose foundational stature, if once dismissed, is now beyond dispute – as well as other seminal Black scholars, like E. Franklin Frazier, St. Clair Drake, William Julius Wilson, Patricia Hill

Collins, and Dorothy Roberts, who followed in DuBois' path. The present moment calls us to build on that legacy with redoubled effort and commitment.

In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we know that recognition is only a start. We commit to necessary and unflinching self-examination, striving to ensure that our own practices do not further racial oppression but instead undermine it. Of course, these steps represent just the beginning, both for our department and for the wider academic study of sociology. To say that Black Lives Matter is a promise rather than an accomplishment. It is a promise we intend to keep.

*Endorsed by the Sociology Department Executive Committee and a Vote of the Faculty