DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE'S SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

Submitted by Nell Gross on June 23, 2020 - 4:11pm

The Department of Geography's Diversity and Inclusion Committee at the University of Washington shares the immense pain, grief, and anger over the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and Tony McDade. In the Seattle region, we say the names of Charleena Lyles, Shaun Fuhr, Che Taylor, Bennie Branch, Said Joquin, Manuel Ellis, and Eugene Nelson. These killings are but a few of the long list of Black lives brutally stolen by historical and institutionalized white supremacy to which the police system is indispensable. When we say Black Lives Matter, the Department of Geography's 2019/20 Diversity and Inclusion Committee supports all Black lives in their intersectional wholeness, including Black trans and gender nonconforming people. We also remember the countless lives taken within Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and immigrant communities. Here, we say the names, John T. Williams, Tommy Le, and Isaiah Obet, killed at the hands of Washington state's police. The Department of Geography's Diversity and Inclusion Committee strongly condemns the continuous threats to dehumanize Black life and the ongoing violence against the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

The UW Geography Diversity and Inclusion Committee's mission is “to foster an inclusive and reflexive community by actively working against intentional and unintentional exclusionary practices.” We recognize that the discipline of geography has historically benefited from and contributed to systems of colonialism, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and hetero-patriarchy. It is the strong opinion of the 2019/20 Geography Diversity and Inclusion Committee that dismantling these systems of oppression begins with anti-racist efforts within University of Washington, the UW Department of Geography, and the discipline of geography at large. As such, the Geography Diversity Committee joins others in signing the petition to Decriminalize UW. We call on the University to address the trauma that our Black students are experiencing by adopting the demands listed in the Call to Action put forth by the Black Student Union, African Student Association, Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights, and Solidarity for Black Student Needs Coalition. Further, the Geography Diversity Committee supports the Black Geographies Specialty Group of the American Association of Geographers in their Call for Transformative Racial Justice. Finally, we acknowledge that anti-racist efforts neither begin nor end with releasing a statement in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. At its core, this statement is a commitment to hold ourselves accountable to doing anti-racist work, following the lead of Black liberation movements and their ongoing struggles for racial justice.

The 2019/20 UW Geography Diversity and Inclusion Committee (Teddy Davenport, Kim England and Soohyung Hur)