

To all members of the WSU Sociology community,

The past few weeks have laid bare the pain of anti-Black oppression and violence in the United States. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and Ahmaud Arbery are heartbreaking, vivid reminders of the loss and brutality suffered by Black Americans at the hands of systemic racism. The ensuing peaceful protests around the country have been met in many places with further police violence and has stimulated further expression of vicious and hate-filled attacks from other Americans. It is not conscionable to stay silent in this moment, and we must reflect on our own role in maintaining anti-Black racism in higher education and in our communities. Black lives matter.

First and foremost, we stand in solidarity with Black persons not only in this moment, but in all ensuing struggles for racial justice. We stand in solidarity with protestors around the country forcing our political leaders and institutions to address anti-Black racism in policing, healthcare, housing, education, pollution, and in all its other forms. We mourn for the hundreds of Black persons murdered each and every year by police officers and acknowledge that our society has collectively failed to stop this violence. We stand with so many across the WSU community, including those in our department, in denouncing all forms of racism and oppression.

We also recognize that this is not the first time that the university community has offered words of solidarity for Black persons following episodes of anti-Black violence. For many years white members of our community have been asked to listen and to act. It is clear, however, that we have failed to do enough. It is our position that the conditions of higher education are not yet conducive to the wellbeing and scholarly success of Black persons. As such, this letter serves as an acknowledgement that something more concrete is necessary. It will take sustained, deliberate attention to address the broader social forces that maintain structural racism within higher education broadly. We can start by addressing academic inclusion and diversity within our department and university community by significantly improving our current policies, procedures, and both our collective and personal actions.

It is important in this moment to focus specifically on the experience of Black persons in society and in higher education. At the same time, we acknowledge that racism in higher education affects Native American, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, multi-racial and other minority communities as well. We are mindful that as we work toward racial justice, forms of racism and how we address them are not always the same. As we are called to do more to end anti-Black racism, so too are we called to address other forms of exclusion, erasure, and discrimination against other under-represented minority groups. It is not our intent to draw focus away from anti-Black racism, yet we recognize this as an opportunity for growth in addressing the broader effects of white supremacy within our department. As such, we plan to use this moment to make our department a more inclusive community for all racial and ethnic groups.

Broadly, the faculty commit to developing an antiracism plan for the department. We commit to finalizing this plan by the end of the 20-21 academic calendar year and will undertake a thorough process to do so. We acknowledge that as a primarily white faculty, benefitting from the very systems we need to change, that this process needs to be collaborative. We need to listen to our students and colleagues here and across the country. We are only an agent of change inasmuch as we include faculty, staff, and both undergraduate and graduate students in our efforts to identify and implement changes. While the stated list is meant only as an initial set of commitments and objectives, it should serve as a minimum standard as well as a source of accountability. In building our plan, it is our aim to do the following: (1) support our racial minority undergraduate and graduate students and any future racial minority faculty to ensure that they succeed on their terms, (2) to ensure accountability for departmental change, and (3) to contribute to broader change within academia that supports the careers and wellbeing of racial minority scholars and students.

Our antiracism plan will involve, at minimum, the following:

1. Invite racial minority scholars, as well as those who study racism, to present in the department or in collaboration with other WSU units every year, supported through at least our standard honoraria or equivalent funds in a collaborative arrangement. A collaboration with Criminal Justice and the School of Languages, Cultures and Race on race and policing/criminal justice is already beginning.
2. Maintain our priority of hiring a scholar with expertise in race for our first available tenure-track position that becomes available, whether on the Vancouver or Pullman campus. In preparation for our next search, the faculty will read and discuss Sensoy and DiAngelo's article, "'We Are All for Diversity, but...': How Faculty Hiring Committees Reproduce Whiteness and Practical Suggestions for How They Can Change."
3. Invite the Sociology Graduate Student Organization into dialog about how we might involve graduate student input into the development of these and future plans and how we can support initiatives of their own.
4. Each standing committee in the department will devise a plan of action for areas within their domain. Undergraduate Studies will specifically solicit feedback from our undergraduate students and will consider anti-racism supports and training requirements for those teaching in the department. Graduate Studies will address improvements in recruiting minority graduate students, compile resources and develop a formal plan to mentor minority graduate students, and work modules on antiracism in academia into our professional socialization (e.g. first year professionalization seminar; workshops), among any other plans. Within this process, we will also identify ways that our standing committees can improve diversity and inclusion for all members of our department.
5. Each faculty member commits to auditing their course materials with an eye towards the representation of minority scholars and to address the issue of systemic racism within the content area. We will also audit our courses for broader scholarly inclusion, focusing on the works of underrepresented minority scholars.
6. Each faculty member commits to self-study using the resources provided by faculty, staff and student members of the department, WSU, ASA, and other professional societies to deepen our understanding of the issues as they intersect with higher education. The

department will maintain a resource page on our website for these materials so that it can be added to over time.

7. We commit to considering our own citation patterns, whether we can include more minority students in our research, where we have opportunities to promote diversity in leadership, where we can meaningfully collaborate with minority scholars, whether our research can more deeply address racial inequality, and other changes such personal reflection may help us identify.
8. Copies of Ibram X. Kendi's "*How to be an Antiracist*" will be purchased by the department and a forum will be held for all members of the WSU Sociology community to discuss the book and to use that discussion to modify any existing actions for the department.
9. Faculty will report on our individual efforts to support anti-racism in higher education in our annual performance reviews for 2020.
10. The department will examine what mechanisms are available to both financially and non-financially support ASA's Minority Fellowship Program, Association for Black Sociologists, and similar groups.
11. The soon-to-be released report on WSU policing will be discussed at a faculty meeting in which we consider actions to support reform at WSU and more broadly. We will use our sociological expertise to work on police reform.

We hope that these actions will make our department, our discipline, and our university community a safer and more supportive environment for racial minority scholars and students. We must recognize the ways in which our department contributes to racial oppression and violence in all its forms and, most importantly, take concrete steps to address those failures. We cannot accept temporary measures or hollow platitudes. We must restructure our community to actively resist racism in whatever ways possible. This is, as scholars and human beings, our most basic obligation.

In solidarity,

Washington State University Sociology Faculty