

Statement on the Murder of George Floyd and the Ongoing Crises of State Violence.

...and now we enter the time of statements and declarations, of institutions decrying racism or racial violence, pledging endless support but often just covering for themselves. After all, isn't a statement just a public plea to be left unscathed?

African American Studies was born out of moments like this, and because we have always been tasked to rebuild in their wake, silence is worse even than cliché. We represent the practice of interrogating systems that produce such moments, but also the rough task of envisioning and developing a world without systems, which promote and produce inequality, punishment and premature death. What we do and advocate is Black survival and continuity even when everything around us is burning.

BU's African American Studies Program condemns the racist arrest and brutal murder of George Floyd by those who continue to violate their oath to protect us and in doing so remind us that Black and non-white people should be seen as less than citizens and less than human. We condemn the reduction of this death to simply that of one man when it is a collective death, including Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others that saying their names has become a language in itself.

And though we decry violence we will not distinguish between lawful and unlawful protest. Why? Because it is now impossible to distinguish between lawful and unlawful given the state-sponsored murder of black people and an administration that is openly corrupt and nakedly indifferent to Black life. So, given that we cannot trust or depend on the current administration, we insist that the University itself advocate for discernible action, even though we are mindful of the huge financial challenges posed by the pandemic. This is a time to act boldly and in doing so reimagine and protect community in the wake of the failures of the state to do so.

For example, we demand more than a full arrest and investigation of all the officers involved in the death of George Floyd, but for the city of Boston to commit to new modes of external oversight and community safeguards against over-policing and police violence. This requires a restructuring of the system of incarceration and a shift of funding from carceral institutions to education and healthcare, especially now that the pandemic has taken the lives of black, brown, native and immigrant people disproportionately; after all, to change policing is to change society.

But to the wider African American Studies community, as we have done since the time of slavery, we will confront dehumanization by asserting our humanity and dignity by any means necessary. We will confront those who assault us fearlessly, making a claim on this country and this city that emerges from a long history of struggle for recognition and an acknowledgement that, as Roxane Gay has so eloquently stated, nobody is coming to save us.

Written on behalf of the African American Studies Program at Boston University.