

June 3, 2020

We, members of the English Department at Fresno State, condemn in the strongest possible terms the continued targeting of unarmed Black citizens by law enforcement throughout the country. We are angered by the latest spate of unprovoked violence: against Ahmaud Arbery, who was fatally shot by a former police officer while jogging; Breonna Taylor, an EMT saving lives during this pandemic, who was killed in her own home, and, most recently, George Floyd, asphyxiated by a white police officer while three others looked on.

We want our Black students, student allies, colleagues, and coworkers to know that they have our unequivocal support at this time of renewed grief in the African American community. You are seen and valued, and are a cherished, integral part of the Fresno State community. We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives Week of Action.

We stand in solidarity with a commitment to fostering safe and inclusive learning environments, including teaching effective civic discourse practices, modeling and expecting rhetorical listening, and making space for the voices that have traditionally been silenced. We stand aligned with efforts to dismantle white supremacist ideologies as they necessitate a Black Lives Matter movement; this means, as examples, that we teach non-dominant literatures and histories; theories of race, social justice, oppression, resistance; and rhetorical approaches and genres to support efforts for a peaceful and just society.

We believe the law enforcement and criminal justice establishments as a whole must interrogate the extent to which they have internalized anti-Black mythologies that permit their members to perpetrate such violence, and, in most cases, to do so with complete impunity. We believe that it is within the purview of a concerned citizenry to hold its public safety officials to account, and to rectify policies and legislation that shield violent actors from appropriate legal recourse.

We recognize that we are all members of a racially hierarchized society in which anti-Black racism is the rot that corrupts our interactions with one another -- not only white and Black, but also the interactions between other minority groups and the African American community. The involvement of a nonwhite police officer in the death of George Floyd makes this fact painfully clear. We, who identify variously as African American, Asian American, Latinx, Arab American, Muslim, immigrant, as well as white, condemn the structures that pit peoples of color against one another, to be used as instruments of white supremacy, benefiting from the violent policing of Black bodies. We refuse to be enablers of anti-Black violence. We stand in support of productive direct social mobilization efforts, firm in our commitment to anti-racist education.

Our discipline teaches critical and creative thinking, reading, writing, and rhetoric. It emphasizes the use of our words to counteract violence. We use our voices now to affirm our support of the Black community at Fresno State, in the Central Valley, and in California; in Minnesota, Kentucky, and Georgia; throughout the United States, and beyond national borders.

In solidarity,

Samina Najmi, Melanie Hernandez, Randa Jarrar, Ginny Crisco, Venita Blackburn, Jefferson Beavers (staff), Alison Mandaville, Kathleen Godfrey, Alexander Adkins Jaramillo, Tanya Nichols, Ruth Y. Jenkins, Melanie Kachadoorian, Brynn Saito, Jenny Krichevsky, John Beynon, John Hales, Corrinne Hales (emerita), Mai Der Vang, Tomaro Scadding, Lyn Johnson (retired), Steven Church, Jeremiah Henry, Linnea Alexander (emerita), J. Ashley Foster, William Arce, Bo Wang, Magda Gilewicz, Cheng-Lok Chua (emeritus), Reva E. Sias, Timothy Skeen, Chris Henson, Lisa Weston (Chair), Sara Salanitro (staff) , Steve Adisasmito-Smith*

Signatures from other departments:

Department of Art and Design

Martin Valencia (Chair), Joan Sharma, Stephanie Ryan, Luis Pelaez, Silvana Polgar, Saam Noonsuk, Paula Durette, Laura Meyer, Jamie Boley, Ed Gillum, Keith Jordan, Tracy Teran, Rusty Robison, Nick Potter, Yasmin Rodriguez, Vanessa Addison-Williams, Stephanie Bradshaw, Ronda Kelley, Laura Huisinga, Rebecca Barnes, Tonyefa Oyake, Chad Jones, Holly Sowles, Imelda Golik, Matt Hopson-Walker, Neil Chowdhury, Ana Stone, Kamy Martinez

Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures

Rose Marie Kuhn, Paula Sanmartin

Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

Ruth Griffin

*This statement has been signed by those members of the department whom we were able to reach during the summer. It will be updated as needed.