

Statement from Members of the Department of History

June 5, 2020

The May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis continues a pattern of systemic racism, police brutality, and Black dehumanization in the United States. As historians working in the downtown core of Toronto, Canada's largest city, we are well aware -- through our research and our teaching -- of the histories of colonialism, racial capitalism, ideological extremism, and racialization that have built these systems. We also know anti-Black racism is not confined to the United States but permeates Canadian governmental, educational and judicial structures and remains insufficiently addressed.

We stand in vehement opposition to the numerous instances of police brutality in the United States that have resulted in the deaths of so many Black Americans, most recently George Floyd.

We stand in solidarity with our Black historian colleagues in the United States who are being called upon by the media and by their colleagues to perform the additional labour of answering questions about the historical roots of today's crisis.

We know our words alone cannot bring about the necessary changes to the broken and cruel system of racial oppression in the United States. We know our words alone cannot ameliorate the anti-Black racism prevalent here in Canada.

But we also know we have the responsibility to take action and to open conversations about historical injustices both at home and globally.

We recognize that it is the responsibility of white and non-Black people to educate themselves about anti-Black racism by critical self-study, and by reading and listening to Black scholars, activists, and members of Black communities.

We pledge to take action to centre and amplify the voices and experiences of Black and other racialized people, particularly within our own workplace.

As scholars and teachers, we reaffirm our commitment to examining our classroom teaching, our course syllabi, our research methods and content, and our actions within our university and the profession to acknowledge and undo our own racial biases.

As a department, we will strengthen our efforts to recruit Black faculty, we will work to increase the number of Black students in our undergraduate program, and we will act on the recommendations of Ryerson's Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review. We are united in our opposition to all forms of oppression, discrimination and intolerance.