



## UA Sociology Statement on Black Lives Matter

The School of Sociology at the University of Arizona condemns the white supremacy, institutionalized racism, and state-sanctioned violence responsible for the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Dion Johnson, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and thousands of other Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color. Black lives matter.

These murders evoke pain, terror, and grief, especially among Black people who have endured various forms of violence over hundreds of years of oppression. As sociologists, we know these murders are rooted in [broader social structures](#), dynamics, and practices spanning centuries. They are a painful reminder that, in key respects, US society functions as a [racialized system](#) in which both overt (“old-fashioned”) and “[color blind](#)” racism continually affect our [social institutions, organizations, and day-to-day lives](#).

[Institutionalized white supremacy](#)—weaponized wittingly or endorsed unwittingly by whites—has been a powerful and pervasive force of destruction for many peoples [worldwide](#) for centuries, and it remains so today. For Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in the US, racist actions, ideas, policies, and institutions have denied them equal [educational](#) and [economic](#) opportunities, stigmatized them as inferior, corroded their [physical](#) and [psychological](#) health, [imprisoned](#) them at alarming rates, shattered their [families](#), destroyed their [communities](#), and killed them. Anger, frustration, and despair are reasonable responses to the grief and terror that these communities have endured for centuries, yet these responses are all-too-often used to discredit and denigrate the reality of this pain.

Meanwhile, white people—especially the most privileged and including most of our own UA Sociology community—are often shielded from these realities. White people do not worry that a routine encounter with police may be fatal. White people need not worry that everyday interactions with business owners or fellow citizens may escalate simple, commonplace activities—walking, driving, enjoying a park—into lethal encounters. White people do not have to [teach their children that their skin color makes them vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and violence](#).

Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color bear the brunt of white supremacy, but all people pay a price. Racism has motivated white Americans to embrace public policies that are [harmful to their own well-being](#), gutting education, healthcare, and social safety nets while expanding and militarizing law enforcement. This is not to ignore that [white supremacy confers real, life-sustaining privileges to those society recognizes as white](#); it is to acknowledge the degradation of white humanity occurring alongside the dehumanization of others. The destruction of Black lives erodes our collective humanity.

Though we have inherited [racist ideas](#) and racist institutions—[fueled and legitimized](#) in no small part by white [academics](#)—we are not beholden to them. Change is neither easy nor comfortable, but it is possible. As sociologists, we recognize that racism transcends individual character: it is a complex network of ideologies, systems, behaviors, attitudes, policies, and power that we must all confront. Likewise, we recognize that transforming policing in American society will not eradicate racism or white supremacy. However, as an [institution historically rooted](#) in the slave patrols that violently controlled Black people in the South and vigilante groups and militias that violently oppressed

Indigenous peoples and people of color throughout the US, [public law enforcement remains central to the reproduction of racism and white supremacy](#). The [formal](#) and [informal](#) structures that protect the police from public scrutiny and prosecution are indefensible. They have facilitated police reliance on [surveillance technologies](#) and [militarized tactics](#) that have [stolen lives, eroded rights, and devastated communities](#). Decades of research demonstrate decisively the urgency of transforming the police—whether through accountability reform, reduced funding, or pursuing alternative systems of public safety. Change requires all of us—especially white people—to rethink ourselves, our communities, and our institutions, and to commit to a practice of anti-racism.

As sociologists we teach and produce knowledge about inequality. Simultaneously, we inhabit a social institution (education) that contributes to the reproduction of inequality and the racist ideologies [we now confront](#). We are especially aware that any lessons we learn from past and present anti-Black violence are meaningless unless we translate them into introspection and action. Silence is not an option. We are committed to developing a clear, concrete plan of action to implement in our School of Sociology in the coming months. This will be spearheaded by a new Diversity and Inclusion committee. Our efforts will be consistent with [non-discrimination](#), freedom of expression, and [academic freedom](#), all of which are vital to our goals.

The School of Sociology at the University of Arizona condemns white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and racism. We stand in solidarity with the loved ones of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Dion Johnson, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and the many other victims of racism and police violence. And we stand in solidarity with all people who refuse to tolerate injustices in society.

Black lives matter.

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