



BOSTON COLLEGE

AFRICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES PROGRAM

June 5, 2020

RE: AADS Response to Black Death, Anti-Blackness, and Political Protest

An Open Letter to Our Students and Communities:

The African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) program at Boston College has been combating racism and fighting for the rights of all people for nearly half a century. Our 50th anniversary celebrations attest to various victories and changes over the decades. However, the fact remains that AADS was founded in the wake of racial protest during the 1960s and shaped over the years (including the most recent years) by similar activist movements. We understand the connections between the protests that have made AADS possible and the protests taking place across the nation. The effects of anti-Black racism are many, and AADS is determined to hold the university, our state, and our country accountable for these generational offenses.

The recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery (while jogging in Georgia), Breonna Taylor (while sleeping in her bed in Kentucky), and George Floyd (while detained for alleged forgery in Minnesota) have ignited wide-spread protests across the country. But these events are not anomalies. The ease with which white citizens call law enforcement on unarmed and nonviolent Black people (be they bird watching or protesting) and the hyper policing of Black pedestrians and drivers (Stop-And-Frisk & Driving While Black) are further exacerbated by the overwhelmingly high incarceration rates, sentencing discrepancies, susceptibility to excessive police force, and the probability of being murdered by police. Without question, anti-black violence and police brutality remain woven into the very fabric of this country. People of African descent in the United States are discriminated against and disproportionately subjected to violence and death at every level of the criminal justice system. The killing of unarmed Black people (of all ages and genders) by both law enforcement and white vigilantes is not new. It is the live filming on digital platforms (Instagram, Facebook Live, Tik Tok, and more) that presents new ways of documenting and archiving such violence. What we are witnessing in these intensely visible and widely reported cases is a lurid illustration of the enduring political, social, and economic subjugation of Black people--confirmation of the United States' ongoing disregard for Black life.

These are grave matters of life and death. They cannot be addressed simply through dialogue and community conversations. Undoubtedly earnest, open dialogue and reflection will always be important tools, but combatting this country's ongoing history of racial injustice and anti-Black racial violence requires action. Eradicating the injustices of power derived from Black death means actively supporting Black life. AADS recognizes that such action must be made not only at the level of the individual--in our hearts and our homes--but also at the institutional level. Private and public businesses, institutions of education, as well as national, state, and city legislatures must act to change the systemic violence directed at Black people and Black communities. It is not enough to say that we do not condone racism. We must also act to change the charters, laws, juridical procedures, operational methods, as well as the formal and informal approaches to resource allocation that directly and indirectly encourage Black death in the U.S.

As an academic, cultural, and socio-political program founded out of racial protest, African and Africa Diaspora Studies calls upon the entire Boston College community to commit itself to taking action. As a community shaped by 50 years of demonstrations, consciousness-raising, and organizing efforts by students, staff, and faculty calling for change at Boston College, AADS calls upon the Boston College community to commit itself to the aims of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). As people who largely come from the very racial backgrounds and communities most directly affected by these atrocities, AADS calls upon all of us to not simply be spectators of history but to act as agents of social justice.

In solidarity,
AADS Faculty

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