

A message from the Psychological and Brain Sciences (PBS) department

We, like many of you, are saddened and angered as we bear witness to ongoing police brutality in the treatment of Black and African-American individuals. We condemn both the recent, visible actions (e.g. Jacob Blake, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade) as well as the slow, pernicious ways (e.g., daily hassles and intergenerational trauma) in which Black and African-American people are discriminated against and oppressed. Anti-Black racism creates and exacerbates [mental and physical health](#) risks, including disproportionate risk for poor outcomes of [COVID-19](#).

We know that experiencing racism or watching it unfold can be quite disheartening. Our nation has struggled with racism since its inception, and the problem can often feel too overwhelming to address.

However, we have hope for the future. As your teachers and mentors, the opportunity to teach so many talented, curious, caring young individuals is inspiring. We see how many of you are actively fighting against racism. Seeing this fills us with pride, and provides us with hope that we are moving towards a more just community.

To our Black students: We recognize that the steady drumbeat of continued crimes against Black people over the past 400 years has taken a deep and traumatic toll. We know that the fight to end racism has been ongoing for many years, with Black people frequently at the forefront of this fight. We also recognize that many of you are tired and frustrated by unresponsive or ineffective leadership on this issue. We can and should do more as a department to address these issues, and we are committed to making positive strides in the future. We intend to use our [departmental diversity report](#) to guide our actions over the next several years. For example, we are keenly aware that our student body and faculty lack diversity. We are working towards increasing Black students and faculty in our classrooms and labs, including taking advantage of programs offered by government funding agencies like the National Institutes of Health to [enhance workforce diversity](#). As faculty, we want you to know that we are reevaluating our own teaching to make sure that it more effectively addresses the problem of racism. This letter is a public promise that we will take concrete action in the coming months and years to improve racial dynamics in our department. This statement is only one step in that process.

To all of our students: The PBS faculty includes individuals with a variety of viewpoints, but we are united in our opposition to racism and taking action as a community to address it. As PBS faculty, we've taught you the importance of critical thinking and intellectual rigor. As budding psychologists and potentially future scientists, we encourage you to use these skills to more fully understand racism, in its historical context; in its contemporary forms, and in its pernicious impacts on mental and physical health outcomes.

To our students who are against racial injustice, but aren't quite sure what to do: As people interested in psychology, we know that many of you were attracted to this field to understand how the mind works, why people make the decisions they do, and to help people. The issues facing our nation right now, such as racism, intergroup conflict, and biased decision making, are areas that psychologists have been studying for decades.

As a department, we acknowledge that words alone will not end racism. We also know that many of you want to know more about racism, and know what you can do to make our world more just. Regardless of our research area, we want you to know that we as faculty

members are here for you, and want to be resources to you. Furthermore, many faculty are interested in these topics, and study the psychology of race. Accordingly, we offer a series of concrete action items to help you get started in understanding the psychology of race, and in getting involved in seeking social justice for Black people.

1. Read scholarly research about racism and racial inequality. Critically evaluate the evidence supporting an author's argument and consider how a reading might inform your own actions. There is a huge literature on these topics from many disciplines. Below are a few examples:
 1. [Racial Disparities](#)
 2. [Report from the APA Presidential Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity](#)
 3. [Diversity science: Why and how makes a difference](#)
 4. [The color-blind racial approach: Does race really matter?](#)
 5. [Toward a social psychology of race and race relations for the twenty-first century](#)
2. [Complete this evidence-based diversity training from Purdue University](#) or explore some of the race-related resources available from the [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#).
3. Talk to your kids and younger siblings, about racism and encourage people you know with kids to do so as well. [The American Psychological Association has a great list of resources on this topic.](#)
4. Consider the ways you might integrate social justice principles into your career plans. For example, graduate students can think about their research, [mentorship](#), teaching, and/or [clinical work](#). Undergraduate students can think about becoming a research assistant for a lab that studies issues that disproportionately impact racial minorities or economically disadvantaged children and adults (e.g., labs for [Dr. Beveridge](#), [Dr. Cloutier](#), [Dr. Dozier](#), [Dr. Forbes](#), [Dr. Hubbard](#), [Dr. Kubota](#), [Dr. Mende-Siedlecki](#), [Dr. Quinn](#) & [Dr. Sadeh](#)). They can also think about their long-term career goals and make sure they ensure their training and eventual job aligns with their social justice values.
5. Consider volunteering or lending support to Black-led organizations or initiatives that promote racial justice. You could focus on Black-led organizations that are geared towards your local community (a quick search online should lead you to some possibilities). You could also support national organizations who have been doing this type of work for years, like the [NAACP](#).
6. Support and amplify the diversity of voices among Black scholars. For example, teachers should ensure diverse perspectives from Black scholars are represented on their class reading lists. Students, faculty, and staff can follow Black scholars on social media to re-share and bolster their messages.

This letter was focused on anti-black racism, due to grievous instances of police brutality toward Black individuals, and our long painful history of racist beliefs and policies stemming from slavery. That being said, we want to acknowledge that Black people are only one of

many groups who have experienced discrimination and oppression in this country. We are committed to improving the climate in our department for all marginalized groups.

Signed,

The Psychological & Brain Sciences Faculty