

Black Lives Matter at Sacramento State's Department of Anthropology
Statement and Action Plan on Anti-Racism
July 2, 2020

The Department of Anthropology at Sacramento State University condemns, in the strongest terms, the recent killings of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Elijah McClain, as well as the thousands of other Black women, men, children, transgender, and nonbinary people who have been the victims of police and state violence. Whether these unjust deaths occur across the nation or closer to home, as in the case of Sacramento's own Stephon Clark, we recognize their painful impact on the wellbeing of members of our campus community. We further condemn the structural inequities that deny many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities adequate access to healthcare, opportunities for the creation of intergenerational wealth, and safe and clean environments. The link between these disparities, disease risk and fatality rates has been laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic. While standing against all forms of racialized oppression, we emphasize unequivocally that Black Lives Matter.

While the current demands for change have been driven by undeniable evidence of [anti-Black racism](#) in our nation, as a department we further acknowledge the harms done by Eurocentric structures and institutions that pervade US history and academia, including our own discipline. These include – but are not limited to – the theft of land from Indigenous communities and the enslavement of people of African origin that underwrite our very existence as a nation. The territory comprising the State of California was violently wrested from its Indigenous stewards, who suffered genocide, dispossession, and ruptured social ties in the wake of Euro-American invasion. Sacramento State, like the rest of the City, sits on land Indigenous people settled and continue to call home. Indeed, descendants of these and other Native American communities are vital members of our university faculty, staff, and student body, whose presence belies the systemic barriers they continue to face at every turn.

In this moment of historical reckoning, we rededicate ourselves as a department and commit to putting our critical reflections into practice and developing an anti-racist action plan that includes:

- **Building anti-racist syllabi and equitable pedagogy.** In all of our classes, we will decenter White voices while elevating the contributions of BIPOC scholars across the four fields of anthropology and cultivating a critical understanding of the Eurocentric conditions through which these contributions have been overlooked or minimized. In addition to these systemic curricular efforts, we are developing a four-field course on the Anthropology of Race and Racism.
- **Opening spaces for dialogue on critical issues affecting our students and campus community.** This includes an anti-racism themed 'brown bag' series of talks in our department, where faculty, students, and community members can share their research and experiences, grapple with difficult ethical questions and collaboratively build an understanding of anthropological approaches to race and the insidiousness of racism across global contexts. We will also open more digital fora that provide opportunities for students to engage with the scientific and sociopolitical-linguistic dimensions of

anthropology beyond the classroom, including starting an Instagram account to record the many perspectives, experiences and identities of our students and faculty.

- **Creating brave spaces in our classes, offices, and hallways.** These are the spaces where we learn how to be anti-racist through mutual commitment, accountability, and active listening. This begins with re-evaluating the portraits of primarily White and male anthropologists of the early 20th century that line our hallways. These portraits suggest an unexamined version of the history of our discipline, which does not reflect the faculty's perspectives on our field and, further, does our students a disservice. We are removing these portraits immediately, to be replaced by a variety of new images that will, we hope, better evoke the global and inclusive voices of both historical and contemporary anthropological knowledge production.
- **Addressing implicit bias.** Implicit bias is all-pervasive. We pledge to be more conscious of our implicit biases and take concrete steps to erode them.
- **Articulating and upholding a Vision Statement for our department that commits to anti-racist action and ongoing critical reflection.** Our long-term goal in cultivating an equitable environment is to ensure future BIPOC students are admitted into, and future BIPOC faculty are hired into, a space that is supportive of, rather than hostile or indifferent to, their contributions.
- **Diversifying our faculty to better reflect the diversity of our student body.** We will take all necessary actions at every step of the hiring process to ensure that we are reaching and recruiting qualified BIPOC candidates.
- **Actively supporting the [CFA's anti-racism and social justice demands](#) and President Nelsen's anti-racism initiatives.** We will further join the efforts of various offices working towards an inclusive campus.
- **Recruiting and proactively mentoring BIPOC students in our undergraduate and graduate programs.**
- **Forming a committee on anti-racism.** This will involve faculty, as well as students, to identify ongoing areas for departmental growth in this process.

This is a conversation that by necessity continues beyond the present moment. There is more work to be done, but this is where we set out. With this statement we have aimed to publicly commit to critically investigating the manner in which [Whiteness](#) has shaped our understanding of diversity and limited our ability to fight racism. We invite feedback and engagement on these ideas from our current and former students, university colleagues, and community members at large, especially from within BIPOC communities, as we commit to protecting and nurturing BIPOC lives and futures in all aspects of our work.