

University of Toledo
Department of English Language and Literature
Statement of Solidarity and Commitment

Tony McDade. Breonna Taylor. Manuel Ellis. Ahmaud Arbery. George Floyd. Rayshard Brooks.

These are the most recent lives we have lost at the hands of law enforcement and state-sanctioned violence in the United States, largely motivated by anti-Black racism and backed up by white supremacy. These murders occur at a time of overwhelming loss, when the pandemic has already caused tremendous suffering, particularly to people of color.

The Department of English at the University of Toledo stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and the protests throughout the country and world that call for racial justice and an end to police violence and brutality. We are proud of those of you who have participated in the protests. You are on our minds and in our hearts right now as we all work together to re-emphasize our commitment to being an anti-racist department.

Firstly, as a department, we categorically renounce the United States' systemic devaluation of Black life, while remaining committed to addressing anti-Black racism inside and outside of our department.

Secondly, we recognize that academia is disproportionately white, and that the experiences of students and scholars of color are not the same as their white counterparts. As educators, scholars, and people we understand that dismantling systemic racism in our classrooms begins with recognizing white privilege, but it does not end there. So, in addition to the anti-racist work that is already being done in our classrooms, we are committed to the following actions moving forward.

We commit to supporting and protecting our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students and faculty by taking greater responsibility in examining our curricula, teaching practices, and advising.

We recognize that doing anti-racist work should not fall simply on BIPOC faculty and students. To that end, we will try to diversify our course content and adopt more inclusive teaching in our classrooms. We will not turn to BIPOC faculty or students for service work or free labor in pursuit of anti-racist work and scholarship. Anti-racist work is a shared departmental responsibility.

We will help students develop the tools—conceptual, historical, political, literary—with which we can understand what is happening now, and how to face it with more knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness.

We will work towards creating safe spaces in our classroom, and not repress or silence [student activists](#) and protestors. Students of color are often the ones rendered most vulnerable, and we will stand with them and make sure that their voices are heard.

We encourage everyone to support and follow the lead of Black activists in your respective communities. We encourage our colleagues with the financial means to do so to support a local organization of their choice, such as the following:

- [List of Bail Funds and Legal Help by City](#)
- [National Bailout Fund via the Community Solidarity Response Network of Toledo](#)
- [Black Lives Matter by City Chapters](#)
- [Black Lives Matter](#)

We are here for you, and we look forward to offering a safe and equitable space in the Fall semester. To that end, we will keep you posted on a Fall virtual forum for students and faculty to come together in anti-racist dialogue.

The ongoing movement for Black lives taking place around the world makes clear that humanity as a whole needs to rise up against racism. We must continue to do more. Even if it is never enough. We will not stop in our commitment to anti-racism. As a department, we are hopeful for a more equitable and just future.

-Chair of the Department of English Language and Literature, Dr. Sara Lundquist