

History Department Statement on the Protests Against Anti-Black Violence

As scholars, educators, and public servants, Stony Brook's history faculty stand with those who have turned to protest as a democratic expression of outrage over police brutality and the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others. Even though the semester is behind us, we feel connected to our larger community of learners, and are thinking of our students and colleagues in these dark days. We want to acknowledge the frustration, pain, and confusion many in our community are feeling, and that we share. We are united in grief and outrage over police brutality, the long history of racial injustice, and the daily indignities, abuses, and injury such injustice and violence precipitate. The novelist and essayist James Baldwin observed that history "does not refer merely, or principally, to the past. ... history is literally present in all that we do." History reminds us that Black Lives Matter, that what we do and say matters, and that there is still much work to be done. As historians, we are committed to trying to understand and address the root causes of systemic racism and to make our society more inclusive and equitable. While we cannot tell the future, we do believe that this will not be over when the protests end. We shall all be processing this for many weeks and months to come and, with our department community, will devise concrete actions, immediate and longer term, we can take as teachers and citizens to contribute to the fight against injustice and systemic racism.