

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

Today, we, the members of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, declare solidarity with all those protesting for justice, for equal application of the law, and for an end to anti-Black violence and oppression.

A white police officer in Minneapolis killed George Floyd on May 25th. This was the third such high-profile killing in recent months, following the deaths of Breonna Taylor in her home and Ahmaud Arbery while jogging. Protests following the release of a video of George Floyd's death, first in Minneapolis and then across the United States, have been met by escalating police violence and incendiary government rhetoric. We state here some of the names of those who have been killed, and we will continue to say and state their names and those of the many victims of racialized violence in North America, in Europe, and in Germany. We condemn white supremacist violence, including police brutality. We will continue to do so in our scholarship, our teaching, and our public outreach.

As an institute representative of German academia, we acknowledge our own privilege. We acknowledge that we as an institution have too often remained silent on the subject of white supremacy. We acknowledge that we as scholars have studied racialized violence in the United States while failing to address structural racism in our own institute. The whiteness of our faculty encapsulates a crucial element of the problem the current protests address, and evidences the colonial, imperial legacies we have inherited and continue to perpetuate. We commit as an institution and as individual academics to hiring tenured and long-term faculty members of color in addition to the PhD students, adjunct faculty members, and the many visiting scholars who have contributed to critical race studies at our institute. A statement of solidarity is only a start. We must fare better at acknowledging and amplifying the voices of individuals and groups who experience racism, racist violence, systemic oppression and discrimination.

The JFKI is an institution with an important, though often romanticized, history of protest and political activism. It is also a transatlantic forum of exchange where scholars such as Audre Lorde have inspired anti-racist research and teaching in the past. During this unprecedented period, we commit to using the remainder of the digital semester (and beyond) to strive to live up to this legacy. We will use our positions as scholars and teachers to raise awareness of the history and current impact of racism in the United States and in our own lives via open reading lists, extensive media outreach, online public discussions, and student-led initiatives.

#BlackLivesMatter