

June 22, 2020

Dear African Studies Center (ASC) Community,

Over the last two weeks, I have been meeting with our ASC staff and elected members of our Core Faculty Advisory Board to develop a response to recent events pertaining to police violence and global protests against the racist dehumanization of Black people. The ASC is committed to a response that unequivocally goes beyond words and that includes meaningful, long term, sustainable and accountable action. We have therefore created both a written statement (below) and an action plan. While specific details of the action plan are still being developed, it will include the following broad areas. This is just the beginning of our work together and we invite you to get involved and share your ideas with us:

ASC Commitment to Action:

1. Offering result-oriented education and outreach, experiential learning opportunities, workshops and distinguished speaker series that address the history and current events that perpetuate racism, anti-Black policies and practices, dehumanization of Black people, and persistent socio-economic disparities in the US, Africa and around the globe.
2. Enhance and project the work and profile of Black scholars in various disciplines.
3. Advocacy for including expanded course offerings, curriculum development, campus policies and programs that seek to eliminate various forms of bigotry, racial bias and racism.
4. Collaboration with other campus units, African partners, and the broader community to deliver programs that promote cultural exchange, racial harmony, equity, empowerment, visibility and inclusion.
5. Advocacy for recruitment, support and retention of African and African American students, faculty and administrators.
6. Commitment of ASC staff and financial resources to addressing racial bias and other anti-racism work. Renewed efforts to secure additional resources to support student and faculty learning, collaborations, and exchanges.

ASC Public Statement:

The MSU African Studies Center (ASC) strongly condemns the recent killings of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery by the police and cowardly racists, as well as all forms of explicit, implicit and structural racism in the United States and worldwide. We at the ASC are utterly dismayed by the continued loss of many black lives at the hands of law enforcement officers whose duty is to serve communities and protect lives. In solidarity, we are unequivocal in our affirmation that Black Lives Matter and that systemic oppression and injustice is inconsistent with our highest ideals. In keeping with our unwavering vision of achieving diversity, inclusion and the intersection of ideas, ASC is firmly committed to identifying and eliminating racism and all forms of bigotry whenever and wherever they appear in our educational, service and research missions. To all students, faculty and staff, please know that we hear you and share your pain. You remain valued members of our ASC community and key contributors to our success as an international and multicultural Center. We further commit to engaging with MSU and partners across institutions in advocating for and upholding the principles of equity, justice and freedom without bias to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or nationality.

Jamie Monson, ASC Director

ASC Faculty Advisory Board (John Kaneene, Amara Ezeamama, Philip Effiong, Amber Pearson, Ruth Mbabazi, Leps Malete, Angela Manjichi, Steve Esquith)