

Philosophy and Law Society
Rutgers Law School - Camden
217 N. 5th Street
Camden, NJ

Philosophy and Law Society Statement in Solidarity with the Black Community

“If we desire respect for the law, we must first make the law respectable” - Louis D. Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice, Legal Philosopher, and Progressive Activist.

In Philosophy and Law Society we often debate the ethics of grey areas, what is right and wrong in complex situations under different theories of morality. However, it is the understanding of our Executive Board members that regardless of what system of morality you find most rationally supported, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and McAtee by officers of the law is morally reprehensible. Unfortunately, countless Black men and women lose their lives prematurely due to state violence.

Law enforcement use lethal force against Black Americans with impunity, and racism plagues police departments across the nation. While many highlight that not all cops are racist, far too many fail to recognize that racism is more than just bigotted statements and beliefs held by individuals. Racism is a system that involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices. In America, the police have always been used to surveille and control Black people. From the slave patrols of the south to the all-white “night-watches” and municipal police departments in the north, the police have always been used to keep Black people in their designated place in society, whether it be as property or far away from white property. 187 years after the abolition of slavery, law enforcement continues to be a vehicle to suppress, control, surveille, punish, and re-enslave Black Americans. The systematic oppression of Black communities by the hands of law enforcement in America is pervasive and long overdue for change. This is not up for debate.

What’s more, the First Amendment right of Americans to peaceably assemble and vocalize their grievances with the government is tantamount in our society. As peaceful protests

take place throughout the world, the continued use of excessive force against protestors of all races by law enforcement highlight the need for change. The continued impunity for law enforcement to use excessive and lethal force against Black Americans sets the precedent for law enforcement to act with impunity against all Americans. All lives don't matter until Black lives matter. This is also not up for debate.

Furthermore, as some protests become rebellions, it is imperative that we recognize that no amount of property will ever have more value than a Black life. This country was birthed from an act of rebellion that included the destruction of property and looting. As many attempt to use Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s memory to condemn property damage, let us use Dr. King's words: "Riots are the language of the unheard." While the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used nonviolence as his preferred method of protest, he also understood and had compassion for those who chose to riot when they got tired of being ignored. As such, the PaLS executive board continues to honor the memory of Dr. King by embracing his belief that *"as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention."* We urge the Rutgers community to walk in the light of Dr. King, and not condemn or villainize the protests, but, instead, listen to the cries of a community unheard and work to fix a system that has failed Black Americans.

It is with this understanding that PaLS, as an organization, formally stands with the Rutgers Black Law Students Association, Black Lives Matter, the Movement for Black Lives, the Black community, and the brave individuals protesting injustice and oppression around the country right now. We implore the Rutgers community to learn more about the history of racism, police violence, and injustice against Black Americans. Show your support for Black lives and constitutional rights by protesting in your preferred fashion, or donating to bail funds for those arrested for exercising their right to protest. Use your voice, your platform, and your privilege to take a stand against racism and the human rights violations Black Americans face everyday at the hands of the police. Silence in these times speaks volumes.

In Solidarity,

The Philosophy and Law Society Executive Board

What to Read

[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#) by Michelle Alexander

[The Fire Next Time](#) by James Baldwin

[Notes of a Native Son](#) by James Baldwin

[Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

[White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism](#) by Robin DiAngelo

[The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.](#)
by Peniel E. Joseph

[How to Be An Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi

[Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America](#) by Ibram X.
Kendi

[Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect?: Police Violence and Resistance in the United States](#)
edited by Maya Schenwar

Where to Donate

NAACP Legal Defense Fund: www.NAACPllegaldefensefund.org

George Floyd Memorial Fund: www.gofundme.com/f/georgefloyd

Minnesota Freedom Fund: www.minnesotafreedomfund.org/donate

I Run with Maud – www.gofundme.com/f/i-run-with-maud

Justice for Breonna Taylor: www.change.org/p/andy-beshear-justice-for-breonna-taylor

Philadelphia Bail Fund: www.phillybailfund.org

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