

Statement on Violence against African Americans and in support of Black Lives Matter from the Coalition for Western Women's History Steering Committee

The public outrage over the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police and the subsequent national protests calling attention to the long history of violence and systematic racism faced by African Americans and other people of color are an indictment of America's present and past inequalities.

The Coalition for Western Women's History decries this ongoing violence against Black women and men and stands in solidarity and support with Black Lives Matter. As scholars of the history of women, gender, and sexuality we want to specifically highlight the ways in which Black women and trans-people have been and continue to be vulnerable to these threats and violences in multiple and intersecting ways. The deaths of Black women like Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and others at the hands of the police cannot be forgotten. We acknowledge the pain of Black communities at large, but also recognize the pain of women in those communities specifically and call out the various forms of neglect they have experienced in America both in life and in death.

We also want to acknowledge and amplify the work that Black women activists have done in founding Black Lives Matter (Patrisse Khann-Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi) and spreading awareness of the intersectional nature of the violence faced by Black women and trans people through efforts such as #SayHerName. As the historian Keisha Blain has demonstrated, these women build on a long legacy of Black women's activism.

As historians of the North American West, we recognize and condemn the prevalence of anti-blackness in American society, and also acknowledge the racisms and systemic inequalities that also harm Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, and other communities of color. Those struggles are absolutely related, but also distinct.

We are committed to centering the intersections of gender and race in our historical scholarship and hope that it will be useful in raising awareness not only of the current moment, but of the historical legacies that led us to it. Our members have addressed many antecedents of today's inequalities including the militarization of law enforcement, violence against women of color, imperialism, memorialization of white supremacy, as well as the protests against racism and advocacy for social justice and sovereignty in the past. The history of this violence and the racial scripts that perpetuate it continues to affect the lives of so many not only in the American West, but across the continent.

We know that statements of support are not enough and must be followed by action that is ongoing beyond this moment. As such, we are committed to the building a foundation for the more inclusive and just future we hope to see. To do so, we will:

- Redouble our efforts to recruit more women and people of color to the CWWH and ensure their participation in its governance structures.

- Continue to use our teaching and writing to reveal histories behind the systems of inequality, but also vow to continue to educate ourselves so when we educate others we are more aware of disparities based on the intersections of race and gender.
- Urge our members to cite and teach Black women and other scholars of color, aware that the politics of citation are real.
- Continue to be a resource of support for grad students and junior scholars, but with an added awareness of the specific issues faced by scholars of color in the academy, such as those described in the #BlackInTheIvory Twitter discussions.
- Resolve to further include issues faced by communities of color, especially women, in our public programing.
- Start by highlighting the work of scholars of color with a list of books and articles that address the issues of race, gender, and violence.

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