Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies Stands in Solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives

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The Department of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington stands outraged at the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade. Police and white supremacist vigilantes brutally stole their lives from those who loved, held, and dreamed with them. This violent dehumanization of Black lives, including those of trans and gender non-conforming people, runs through the “liberal” Seattle-Tacoma region, where police in the past three months have killed Shaun Fuhr, Benny Branch, Said Joaquin, and Manuel Ellis. Here we say the name of Charleena Lyles, shot by police in her home near the UW-Seattle campus. We say the names of John T. Williams and Tommy Le to remember the Black, indigenous, Latinx and Asian immigrant lives taken by police violence in Washington state.

The origins and founding of the United States in the sanctioned violence of chattel slavery and indigenous dispossession persists today in systemic imperialist, capitalist, heteropatriarchal white supremacy. Anti-Black violence is at the core of U.S. police, military, educational, medical, and prison systems. It circulates globally from these systems’ integration with political economies of extraction, production, surveillance, and war. We recognize that dismantling white supremacy within state institutions involves examining the one in which we work, teach, and learn. These critiques are central to our departmental feminist praxis.

To support the Movement for Black Lives and declare that Black Lives Matter requires listening to the voices of the Black Student Union on our own campus, where their Call to Action for the University to address anti-Black trauma has been incompletely met. We support the full range of their demands, forged in the double loss of life to police violence and COVID-19, including accommodations for Black and directly impacted students. Furthermore, we support the Decriminalize UW call for the University to follow leadership in higher education across the nation, most notably the University of Minnesota, and divest from the Seattle Police Department. We stand in solidarity with those protesting these longstanding unaddressed injustices here, across the country, and around the world.