



Department of Theological Studies

“Joint Statement on Racial Injustice”

Saint Louis University
Department of Theological Studies
June 12, 2020

We, the faculty in the Department of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University, mourn the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery (1994-2020), Breonna Taylor (1993-2020), and George Floyd (1973-2020), among too many others lost to racial violence. We are outraged at the continued violence against African Americans, often at the hands of law enforcement. We recognize that this ongoing violence, rooted in our nation’s original sins of enslavement and white supremacy, reflects systemic racial inequities and racism that have been unmasked and exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

As a Jesuit, Catholic university, [Saint Louis University](#) is committed to linking its resources to local, national, and international communities “in collaborative efforts to alleviate ignorance, poverty, injustice and hunger,” and seeks to create a community of “men and women for others” that includes people of all racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Resisting structures that perpetuate racial injustice requires committing ourselves to genuine racial equity—not mere representation—in our student body, faculty, and university administration. It also entails full partnership and transparency at all levels of the university so that marginalized voices are not pressured into complicity or silenced but can enact deep structural change.

The Department of Theological Studies plays a key role in this mission and, in that spirit, we offer this statement of solidarity with those who bear the overwhelming weight of systemic racism, as well as a departmental commitment to transformative antiracism education on our campus and in our community. The pursuit of racial justice runs deep to the heart of our vocation and our theological commitments. Too often, the marginalization of others runs concurrent with a failure to affirm that every human being is made in the image of God and thereby endowed with dignity and worth. In the words of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, “Love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce.”

We have come up short in meeting these commitments. The realization of a positive peace, in the words of [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), means rooting out the semblance of peace in the absence of justice. It means naming our own varied roles in perpetuating systemic racism so that we may see clearly the task ahead. Meeting these commitments requires both immediate and long-term actions. In the coming academic year, we pledge to initiate renewed discussion of the [Clock Tower Accords](#), adopted in the aftermath of the shooting deaths of Michael Brown (1996-2014) in Ferguson and VonDerrit Myers, Jr. (1996-2014) in the Shaw Neighborhood, mere miles from the heart of our campus. Those commitments, collaboratively



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drafted by community activists, SLU students, faculty and administrators, provide a system of accountability to address the pain of racial and economic injustice in the university's immediate neighborhood.

Additionally, the Department of Theological Studies recommits itself to the ongoing work of creating a welcoming space to critically examine the underlying realities of racial injustice and white supremacy and their impact on our discipline.

- We commit to scrutinizing systems of knowledge and power in the fields of theology and religion, in particular by amplifying scholarship in Black theology, Womanist theology, and African American religious history, as well as other voices that illuminate the experiences and insights of those marginalized by centuries of racial oppression.
- We commit to engaging the multiple religious traditions represented by our faculty and our students by lifting up and celebrating each tradition's distinct contributions to the societal conversation on the common good.
- We commit to defending the inherent worth of all persons created in the image and likeness of the Creator by confronting racial injustice and violence in all its forms.
- We commit to collaborating as a department and with all members of the university community to integrate the voices of Black scholars and lived experiences of African American communities in our course offerings, syllabi, and reading lists throughout our undergraduate and graduate curricula, as well as in our public scholarship.

For those times when we, the faculty of the Department of Theological Studies of Saint Louis University, have failed to live up to these values, we offer our most sincere and profound apology. As scholars we yet remain lifelong students. May what we have witnessed in these past weeks transform us to become "righteous and holy in the truth" (Ephesians 4:24) and always "eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14).