This is a copy of an email, sent by Dian D. Squire, Ph.D. (Gender pronouns: he/him/his), Assistant Professor, Counseling-Student Affairs, Northern Arizona University

### **From:** [Dian D Squire](https://rankin-consulting.com/staff/dian-squire)

### **Sent:** Sunday, May 31, 2020 1:08:23 AM

### **Subject:** A note to our students on anti-Black racism

Hello Counseling-Student Affairs past, current, and incoming students,

This email is long. Please stick with me.

I write this email with a heavy heart, anger, and tiredness surrounding the continued killings of innocent Black people in this country. On May 25, 2020, [George Floyd](https://www.ajc.com/news/victim-police-encounter-had-started-new-life-minnesota/rMmT2wipeQFNnsypmh6oBL/) was killed by a police officer who pinned him down to the ground with his knee on his neck while pleading “I can’t breathe”. This moment mirrored the death of [Eric Garner](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/i-cant-breathe-five-years-after-eric-garner-died-in-struggle-with-new-york-police-resolution-still-elusive/2019/06/13/23d7fad8-78f5-11e9-bd25-c989555e7766_story.html) in 2014. Both men were unarmed. On March 13, 2020, [Breonna Taylor](https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/11/family-seeks-answers-fatal-police-shooting-louisville-woman-her-apartment/) was shot 8x by police in her own home who served a warrant at the wrong address. On May 27, 2020, [Tony McDade](https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-mourns-tony-mcdade-black-transgender-man-killed-in-florida), a Black trans man, was killed by police in Tallahassee, FL. On February 23, 2020, [Ahmaud Arbery](https://www.nytimes.com/article/ahmaud-arbery-shooting-georgia.html) was chased down by two white men, videoed by a third, and shot and killed in South Georgia.

These are only a few of the names and stories of Black people who have been killed for being Black since the start of 2020. These killings and the many other forms of anti-Black violence that go un- or underreported have led to the recent protests occurring in many communities around the country.

There are no official university statements of acceptance, tolerance, diversity, and inclusion that any campus administrator can write that will make a meaningful dent in deconstructing a system of white supremacy that is the bedrock of our country. **Simply put, this country is built on settler colonialism including anti-Black racism, whiteness, and Indigenous erasure.**

To be very clear, **all non-Black people who are socialized in this country work from an anti-Black racist view and are complicit in reproducing whiteness**. Because this country was founded on these principles and they are systemic (i.e., embedded in our practices and policies), we are all a part of the problem. As current and future university students, staff, and faculty, we cannot continue to believe that anti-Blackness and whiteness does not flow throughout all of our university structures. We cannot continue to think that [diversity and inclusion will bring us anywhere toward equity and justice](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/03/30/colleges-need-language-shift-not-one-you-think-essay). **We cannot simply believe we are “not racist”; each of us has to be anti-racist.** This means that we must actively work against racism.

Anti-Black racism is directly linked to the dehumanization of Black people and the worldview that Black people are non-human; for those who work from this worldview, believing that Black people are non-human Others, there is the belief that Black people can be bought, used, sold, and killed at will. This ideology stems back to the earliest days of the [“founding” of this country](https://www.amazon.com/Indigenous-Peoples-History-ReVisioning-American-ebook/dp/B00J6Y98UE/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=2KN4UM1D2R2V2&dchild=1&keywords=indigenous+peoples+history+of+the+united+states&qid=1590900169&sprefix=indigenous+%2Caps%2C204&sr=8-1). It continues to permeate our country in invisible and explicit ways (e.g., the killing of Black people in clear daylight). Anti-Black racism is different than racism that other People of Color face. For example, as an Asian American person myself, I face a different form of racism than my Black friends, peers, and colleagues and I can also perpetuate [anti-Black racism and sometimes do subconsciously](https://medium.com/awaken-blog/30-ways-asians-perpetuate-anti-black-racism-everyday-32886c9b3075). These are socialized ideas that we must actively and continually attend to. People of color can and do engage in anti-Black racism in the racial hierarchy.

Whiteness is the socially constructed ideology that creates and reproduces a certain set of normative beliefs, knowledges, and ways of being that create lopsided power, privilege, and domination possibilities for those who invest in whiteness, and for white people. A couple aspects of whiteness are [white privilege, white fragility](https://www.amazon.com/White-Fragility-People-About-Racism/dp/0807047414/ref%3Dsr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=white+privilege&qid=1590900060&sr=8-1), and [color-evasiveness](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837). These seemingly normative, neutral, and non-self correcting ways of being and living draw from the white supremacist and settler colonialist (il)logical beginnings of what is currently known as the United States of America and are also [embedded within the creation of our university systems](https://www.amazon.com/Ebony-Ivy-Troubled-Americas-Universities/dp/1608194027/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=1020X1KA4FO8&dchild=1&keywords=ebony+and+ivy&qid=1590900219&sprefix=ebony+and+iv%2Caps%2C195&sr=8-1). Whiteness intersects with other forms of oppression such as [transphobia, ableism, genderism, and classism](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10665684.2018.1496046) thereby compounding asymmetrical power and privilege dynamics away from marginalized groups.

Together, these two forms of domination intertwine and lead to the current state of this country, including our individual anti-Black thoughts and actions. Racism is everywhere. It is in our homes, in our friend groups, in our classrooms, in our assistantship offices. It permeates our communities and our college. **This is a call to action.**

This email is a call to:

1. Reach out to your Black colleagues, friends, family, and community members and check in on them. Let them know that you are thinking about them and then offer your listening ear and [any resources you may be able to offer.](https://www.kqed.org/arts/13881199/5-ways-to-show-up-for-racial-justice-today) Do not allow [fragility](https://www.psychotherapy.net/article/racism-white-privilege-psychotherapy) to get in the way if they do not want to talk right now, recount the horrific acts happening around the country, or share with you their emotions and perspectives.
2. Interrogate the ways that your various forms of privilege allow you to ignore what is happening in our country. Did you recognize the names I listed at the beginning of the email? If not, why? Can you swipe and tap past stories on your timelines that are about Black killings? Do you even have them in your timelines at all? If not, why not?
3. Think about how you feel regarding anything that I have written in this email. What is your reaction? Why do you feel that? How do think Black people feel right now? How do you know that? Why don’t you know for sure?
4. Spend the next few months when you are not in class doing readings, learning, and reflecting about the topics I have listed above and other [forms of oppression](https://www.amazon.com/Readings-Diversity-Social-Justice-Maurianne/dp/0415892945). I have provided a list of books below. Many of your peers on this email have also read really great books that I hope they will share. Here is another list about [75 things white people can do for racial justice.](https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234)
5. Learn about what is happening in your community regarding dismantling anti-Black racism. [Showing up for Racial Justice](https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/) has many chapters around the country and tend to be predominantly white spaces where white people support other white people in becoming anti-racist. There are many other local organizations doing good work both to help their members become anti-racist and to support their communities in making significant changes to racist policies and practices. Even if you don’t have a local group, [form a group](https://www.racialequitytools.org/act/strategies/caucus-affinity-groups) with your peers to discuss these topics.
6. Examine your assistantship and job space. As you think about your experience at NAU, how will you analyze the way that racism plays out in our university? What skills and knowledges do you need to be able to best do anti-racist work? If you are saying that this task is too large or you don’t know where to start, then perhaps learning and listening more is a good place to start. As soon as you are able to recognize how racism plays out in our every day, then you are able to better dismantle it. A good place to start relating to our field is the [ACPA Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization](https://www.myacpa.org/sirjd) and the [Bold Vision Forward](https://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/SIRJD_GuidingDoc2.pdf) Document. I am one of the creators of this imperative and a co-author on this document. We have talked about this in class and our first years will spend time with the document as well in the Fall.
7. Talk to your family, friends, partners, and others about these topics. We have to always think about our sphere of influence. Who do you have the best ability to impact? Use that relationship to make meaningful change no matter how small.

 A few book resources in addition to those linked throughout:

* [How to be an anti-racist](https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist-1) and [Stamped from the Beginning](https://www.amazon.com/Stamped-Beginning-Definitive-History-National/dp/1568585985) by Ibram Kendi (additional book recommendations by Kendi [here](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/29/books/review/antiracist-reading-list-ibram-x-kendi.html))
* [White Fragility](https://robindiangelo.com/publications/) by Robin Diangelo
* [Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria](https://www.amazon.com/Black-Kids-Sitting-Together-Cafeteria/dp/0465060684/ref%3Dpd_sbs_14_6/136-4252900-2578732?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=0465060684&pd_rd_r=f8fa5cee-b737-41b7-9439-418a8733b161&pd_rd_w=kqwdB&pd_rd_wg=MgDtB&pf_rd_p=12b8d3e2-e203-4b23-a8bc-68a7d2806477&pf_rd_r=5JD8BK8KCNGMBX7PXGYV&psc=1&refRID=5JD8BK8KCNGMBX7PXGYV) by Beverly Tatum
* [Me and White Supremacy](https://www.amazon.com/Me-White-Supremacy-Combat-Ancestor/dp/1728209803/ref%3Dpd_sbs_14_13?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=1728209803&pd_rd_r=057dc62c-d044-4b9b-bacb-0d6091d643a5&pd_rd_w=lKJHC&pd_rd_wg=PUdhV&pf_rd_p=12b8d3e2-e203-4b23-a8bc-68a7d2806477&pf_rd_r=TMCE22VGA0YV5HGQW7V4&psc=1&refRID=TMCE22VGA0YV5HGQW7V4) by Layla Saad
* [Racial formation in the United States](https://www.amazon.com/Racial-Formation-United-States-Michael/dp/0415520312/ref%3Dpd_sbs_14_5/136-4252900-2578732?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=0415520312&pd_rd_r=01013a3f-1b68-4ffb-af02-76145ec4f0f3&pd_rd_w=ksxlR&pd_rd_wg=QvBLf&pf_rd_p=12b8d3e2-e203-4b23-a8bc-68a7d2806477&pf_rd_r=MJQFMEHWSVCGF1CY9FFX&psc=1&refRID=MJQFMEHWSVCGF1CY9FFX) by Omi and Winant
* [Racism without racists](https://www.amazon.com/Racism-without-Racists-Color-Blind-Persistence/dp/1442276231/ref%3Dsr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=colorblind+racism&qid=1590902077&s=books&sr=1-2) by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva
* [The color of law](https://www.amazon.com/Color-Law-Forgotten-Government-Segregated/dp/1631494538/ref%3Dpd_sbs_14_20?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=1631494538&pd_rd_r=2860c107-f4bd-4e36-8365-6b07f02e5023&pd_rd_w=ghpZf&pd_rd_wg=urO2H&pf_rd_p=12b8d3e2-e203-4b23-a8bc-68a7d2806477&pf_rd_r=H82Y6HHGFTCWHCVA9XZD&psc=1&refRID=H82Y6HHGFTCWHCVA9XZD) by Rothstein

 As always, I am here to support your development. Reach out if necessary. But also reach out to classmates and others who hold your same racial identity to process. [Caucusing](https://www.racialequitytools.org/act/strategies/caucus-affinity-groups) with people who share your same identity is a great way to begin to tease apart your role in maintaining racism.

Lastly, and importantly, #[BlackLivesMatter](https://blacklivesmatter.com/).

Dian

Sent from the Traditional and Ancestral Lands of the Navajo, Hopi, Paiute, Havasupai, Hualapai and several other tribal nations.

“When our lived experiences of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice.” -bell hooks