



May 20, 2022

The African American Studies Program at the University of Texas at El Paso
Statement of Condemnation of the Violence Exacted Upon Black Communities.

The African American Studies Program, in the most stringent of terms, condemns the brutal and wanton murder of Black men, women and children happening daily across this nation. We are incensed at the continued objectification and condemnation of Black people and this country's open and malignant disregard for the needs and realities of the Black community. As an academic Program, we continue to condemn systemic and institutional racism as well as the overt and covert practitioners of white supremacist ideations and the destructive realities they visit upon Black people; victims who are subjected daily to racialized violence, micro and macro aggressions, character assassinations, inhumane treatment and daily governmental failures to recognize, much less protect, Black people's rights as human beings and residents of this country. It is past time to bring such atrocities, in all their forms and practices, to a complete and abrupt halt.

On May 14, 2022, 10 people were brutally and publicly murdered without provocation while shopping at Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Their murderer showed no remorse for his actions or concern for those he targeted, those he shot, those he murdered, nor did he care for all those who would be devastated by his calculated and directed violence against this Black community. He cared not for the families, not for their children and not for the devastation his murderous rampage was designed to bring about. The violent attacks upon Black people, the denial of basic human rights, the disregard for the social, economic and political welfare of Black communities, must be brought to an immediate end. We are responsible for challenging the violence and racism this monster in Buffalo wrought, for resisting the violence and racism monsters like him all over this nation bring to our communities daily. We are responsible for naming inequality, for standing against tyranny whenever and wherever we find it and for challenging all those who direct or subscribe to such ideologies.

Ten innocent people were murdered at the hands of a white supremacist who killed with enthusiasm and intent; yet he is not alone nor were his actions an aberration. We must now stand on behalf of the people he murdered and to say aloud and often that they matter to us; their lives matter to us and we will advocate for truth, justice and humanity in their stead and in their name. We must pay homage to the lives taken here but also to the inspiration to demand truth and justice that their deaths produced. We **MUST** pledge our own humanity to the selfless act of righteousness; of truth; of courage and of responsibility on their behalf. Their murderer, and the ideologies that spawned him, cannot have the final word on our humanity.

It is time for self-introspection. The calculated murder of these 10 beautiful people, the shooting of three others and the trauma of this event for the families, demand that we pay heed to and

engage the principles of collective work and responsibility; the important need to be vigilant in the fight for equality, that we never forget the value of a human life and the need to protect it. Now is the time to take these stances because there can be no other stance to take. To call one's name is to honor that person. To speak it aloud is to summon all of the power that person had, the memories he or she created and the love and respect of those who knew them. To call a name is a powerful symbol of reverence and respect and so the African American Studies Program calls out:

Ruth Whitfield; Aaron Salter, Jr.; Heyward Patterson; Pearl Young; Geraldine Talley; Celestine Chaney; Katherine Massey; Margus Morrison; Andre Mackneil; and Roberta Drury

Yet, we must also recognize the fact that there are a lot of names that we must account for; who we are responsible for. It is imperative that we address the self-destructive behaviors happening within our communities as a result of centuries of oppression, miseducation and injustice, if we are to fully protect our communities from all who would do them harm. It is now time for those who love freedom and equality to decide our individual and collective responses to not only this horrid event, but all the horrid events practiced against Black communities throughout this country past, present and future. In what ways shall we, in the words of poet Margaret Walker, let "a second generation full of courage issue forth; let a people loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our blood." How shall we transform our personhood into effective and consistent challenges to projected violence and injustice directed at our communities? This is indeed the question and it demands a cogent answer and response.

The African American Studies program proudly aligns with all those standing for justice and demanding an end to the murder, objectification and violence practiced against Black people wherever they reside and all attempts to deny or devalue our humanity. We are rightfully angry and call for a transformation of this nation's racialized policies and an end to white supremacy. We must become both the ideological and physical dam which holds back the tide of injustice and take away its power to sweep over humanity unabated. Now is the time, for in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. the "time is always right to do what is right." The time for action has never been more clear or more urgent. The African American Studies Program is committed to the work of ending the injustices and tyranny that surround us daily. We will continue speaking truth to power so that those victimized by white supremacy, by institutional and systemic racism, by racialized violence, shall never be forgotten, but rather, in us, shall have outspoken and committed advocates in defense of their humanity.



The African American Studies Program, University of Texas at El Paso