

WPSA Statement on Racial Violence, Systemic Racism, and Police Brutality

The murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd underscore the intolerable cost of racial violence, systemic racism, and police brutality in the United States. Protestors filling our streets are proclaiming their refusal to tolerate the profound racial injustices that have defined our country since its inception. Many of our colleagues and students have joined the struggle for political, institutional, and cultural change.

The Western Political Science Association condemns the systemic racism and institutionalized violence that have inflicted so much destruction on Black lives and communities of color. We recognize the burdens that systemic racism has imposed on Black and Brown colleagues and students in our own institutions. We celebrate the activists and scholars whose hard work over many generations has enabled a greater understanding of and more powerful response to these evils.

We endorse the recent statement of the [American Political Science Association Condemning Systemic Racism](#).

"The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have reignited protests and calls for justice in the United States and across the world. These murders are among the latest in a long history of police brutality and violence upon members of the African American community. The American Political Science Association recognizes and condemns in the strongest terms the systemic racism that contributed to these deaths and shares the justified outrage it has provoked. We strongly support the right to protest and are alarmed by the government's violent responses to peaceful protesters, including excessive uses of force in the name of order. We are also alarmed at the opportunistic criminal conduct of some who do not share the protesters' commendable goals. These actions are a severe violation of democratic principles.

"Political scientists have long examined the linkages between race, power, governance, social injustice and oppression. This scholarship has made an invaluable contribution to our discipline and to public discourse. It has illuminated the sources and structures of pervasive inequality and human rights abuses in the United States, as well as the resulting social, political, and public policy consequences. A more just society will require more of this knowledge but also action by all of us within the discipline to examine and address how our own programs, procedures, teaching, and scholarship may be shaped by or contribute to upholding, rather than dismantling, systems of oppression. As an association, we recognize our responsibility to elevate the existing scholarship, support scholars, and promote new research and pedagogy in this area, and continue to examine our own policies and programs towards the realization of a more informed and just society."

We further endorse the recent statement of the [Southern Political Science Association on Racism and Social Injustice](#).

"We write today to express our condemnation of institutional racism and social injustice that we see in United States and to stand with our colleagues and students, particularly those of color, who fight against inequality in society. We must do better at recognizing racial injustice, educating others about it, and standing up to it in order to change factors in society that perpetuate it.

“The SPSA is a non-partisan organization that, typically, does not issue positions on public policy. However it does speak out on issues that affect its membership and the central missions of the Association which include teaching, scholarship, and communication and respect among scholars. Racism and injustice in society inhibit all of these. Thus we must speak out against systemic racism, and its history of violence and oppression most recently seen in the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Tragically, these unjustifiable killings are only the most recent evidence of a much broader and insidious problem that we must combat as scholars and human beings. We recognize the profound negative impact that police brutality and racial biases in policing have had on black and minority communities and we offer our compassion and support in the efforts to create change. The SPSA encourages and supports efforts to reduce racial bias, injustice, and inequality in all its forms, through teaching, scholarship, engagement, and in the practice of politics. Political scientists have a long history of studying issues of institutional and systemic racism, power relationships, governance, human rights, and social injustice. We have a responsibility as scholars to speak out from our place of knowledge on the issues that so profoundly affect our students and colleagues.”