

Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

*The Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management Program (EPSM),
Milano School of Policy, Management and the Environment, The New School*

BIPOC EARTH Student Collective

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Environmental Action Rooted in Transformational Healing

Environmental Studies Program, The New School

Across the United States and the world, powerful mobilizations are rising in opposition to the ongoing systemic racism and anti-Blackness that for centuries has continued to oppress Black peoples. The tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of police brutality is unfortunately only one of countless atrocities perpetrated against Black peoples at the hands of dominant institutions shaped by legacies of continuing white supremacy. EPSM condemns these and stands in solidarity with all Black people across the country and the world on the frontlines mobilizing to demand justice for George Floyd and all Black Lives.

The depths of racism, anti-Blackness and injustice pervading many institutions here and in many parts of the world make the list of Black victims too long to fathom. Only considering contemporary police brutality in the United States, the rate at which Black people are killed by police is more than twice as high as the rate for whites; since the start of 2015, at least 1,252 Black people have been shot and killed by police, and that does not even include those who have died in police custody or killed using other methods.¹ Some of the names of those killed only since the death of Eric Garner in 2014 include the following: Ezell Ford, Michelle Cusseaux, Tanisha Anderson, Tamir Rice, Natasha McKenna, Walter Scott, Bettie Jones, Philando Castile, Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Eric Reason, Dominique Clayton, Breonna Taylor, among so many others.

Racist police brutality by no means exhausts the multiple ways in which Black peoples in the United States and across the world are victimized. These include, among others, the structural racism of the justice system and the prison-detention-industrial complex,² as well as the racial inequities in health, housing, food and education, propelled by racial capitalism and settler colonialism and now exacerbated by COVID-19. This is in addition to the countless political, economic, environmental and climate injustices rooted in centuries of persistent racism, toxic colonialism, and white supremacy, so disproportionately impacting Black communities in the US and across the world, including harms to Black migrants, also part of the Black diaspora the world over.³ As has been emphatically voiced by Black and allied activists and scholars, so many of our contemporary global crises, including climate and environmental emergencies, are substantially rooted in anti-Black injustices.⁴ From the theft of Black bodies from Africa, enslaved in the world's plantations⁵ that laid the groundwork for the planetary

¹ See Code Switch (NPR), "A Decade Of Watching Black People Die." May 31, 2020. URL (Accessed 6/7/2020): <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/29/865261916/a-decade-of-watching-Black-people-die>; and Washington Post's database tracking police shootings at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>.

² See, e.g., N.A. Heitzig. 2015. "On The Occasion Of The 50th Anniversary Of The Civil Rights Act Of 1964: Persistent White Supremacy, Relentless Anti-Blackness, And The Limits Of The Law." *Hamline University's School of Law's Journal of Public Law and Policy* 36(1):54-79. R. M. Brewer and N. A. Heitzig. 2008. "The Racialization of Crime and Punishment Criminal Justice, Color-Blind Racism, and the Political Economy of the Prison Industrial Complex." *American Behavioral Scientist* 51(5):625-644.

³ See, e.g., B.J. Palmer. 2017. "The Crossroads: Being Black, Immigrant, and Undocumented in the Era of #Blacklivesmatter." *Georgetown Journal of Law & Modern Critical Race Perspectives* 99

⁴ See, e.g., W. Wright. 2018. "As Above, So Below: Anti-Black Violence as Environmental Racism." *Antipode*.

⁵ See, e.g., J. Davis, A.A. Moulton, L. Van Sant, and B. Williams. 2019. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises." *Geography Compass*:e12438.

exploitation of human and non-human bodies,⁶ to the racism that underpins contemporary environmental and climate injustices,⁷ *ecological matters cannot be addressed without centering Black matters*.⁸ This includes Black lives, histories, struggles, knowledges and futures; it also emphatically includes centering diverse Black gender and queer identities.

Systemic racism, anti-Black violence and trauma to Black lives continues in many ways that are visible and so many others that have been made invisible. Yet the same applies for the countless creative and resilient ways in which Black lives have always resisted and mobilized for justice, liberation and better worlds across history, from struggles against slavery, colonialism/settler colonialism and their continuing legacies, to those against the systemic violence and injustices of our racial present. The harms and struggles of Black lives are matters that must be front and center to all of us. Across the world and for many other groups, the leadership of Black peoples, the strength of Black movements, and the knowledges of Black activists and intellectuals, and distinctively those of Black women, have always galvanized and inspired anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal and transformative justice movements of many kinds. These include the movements of peoples of color, Indigenous peoples (including Black-Indigenous), women, workers, students, queer liberation and environmental/climate justice movements who across the US and the world are also now called upon to show up for Black lives—and many indeed are doing so. We hope many more will join.

At EPSM we commit to do our part to actively stand in solidarity with Black lives, struggles, mobilizations, aspirations and projects. We call upon our community, including staff, students and faculty to stand together in proactive efforts for racial justice and liberation from all forms of anti-Blackness and systemic racism. We call, specifically, for our community to stand in solidarity with Black staff, students and faculty, and to support Black empowerment in all dimensions of our program and at all levels of our institution. Furthermore, we call on the members of our community, particularly faculty, to proactively make space, and when necessary to step aside to center Black voices, leadership, histories, knowledges, projects and aspirations. We specifically call for faculty to build anti-racist and Black matters into the structure and substance of their work and actions, whether in teaching, research or service. Curricula can often marginalize Black matters, normalize Eurocentrism and perpetuate racial oppression; these must be actively transformed to foreground racial, including epistemological justice. We strongly echo calls across our University to make deliberate efforts to confront and address anti-Blackness, systemic racism and white supremacy in all forms—both outside and inside our institution, and to advance institution-wide mechanisms that strengthen and center Black lives and matters. We believe such efforts must be advanced and supported across all capacities, from governance to teaching, research, public engagement, representation, demographic composition (e.g., hiring and recruitment), knowledge sharing and production in all fields, among other areas. Finally, we invite our EPSM community, particularly our Black members, to call upon us to make good on our commitment and, if so desired, to bring forward any proposals conducive to this purpose. We also call upon our non-Black community members, particularly but not exclusively our white members, to keep each other accountable in our shared efforts to end all forms of anti-Blackness and white supremacy. We ask all to hold us, and each other to these commitments so that we endeavor to act always in ways conducive to racial justice.

⁶ See, e.g., K. Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁷ See, e.g., Pulido, L. "Racism and the Anthropocene." (2018) "Racism and the Anthropocene" in *The Remains of the Anthropocene*. Edited by G. Mitman, R. Emmett and M. Armiero. University of Chicago Press, pp. 116-128.

⁸ See, for example, A. Bledsoe and W. Wright. 2018. "The anti-Blackness of global capital." *Environment and Planning D* 37 (1):8-26.