



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Organization: National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS)

Contact: *Bradley J Sommer* | President & CEO | president@nagps.org

Fang Zhang | Vice President & COO | vice-president@nagps.org

National Association of Graduate-Professional Students Statement on the Current State of Race in America and Academia

On May 25th, George Floyd was murdered by police officers in the streets of Minneapolis, MN. Two weeks earlier, on May 8th, Breonna Taylor was shot and killed while asleep in her home by law enforcement in Louisville, KY while executing a “no knock” warrant. And just two days before that, on May 6th, the nation learned of the February murder of Ahmad Arbery, a 25 year old black man in Brunswick, GA who was hunted, shot and killed by two white men, while jogging in the streets. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmad Arbery, while horrific, are not surprising because we have seen this before. The senseless and unprovoked killing of unarmed black men and women by law enforcement and private citizens has been commonplace in our country since its founding. We must stop this, and address issues of systemic racism in our society and our institutions.

The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) condemns the injustices, inequalities, and hatred in our society that leads to the mistreatment and killing of black men and women in America. We also stand in solidarity with members of our community and all others who are exercising their constitutional right to peacefully protest to fight for the justice and equality that has not been afforded to our black brothers and sisters. While we do not condone the rioting currently going on in the country; it was Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr who said “a riot is the language of the unheard.” And, for too long we, as a society, have not heard the cries of our black brothers and sisters and have remained silent in the midst of their mistreatment and suffering. We cannot wish for things to go “back to normal” because “normal” is a place rife with injustices and the mistreatment of black bodies. We, however, must work to move forward and create a new normal that is just and equitable for all.

We also express support and profound admiration for the black graduate and professional students across the country at this time. Graduate school is difficult and stressful enough by itself, and it is made that much more difficult for black graduate students and graduate students of color, simply because of the color of their skin. These students carry the burden of



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

juggling teaching, research, mentoring, writing theses and dissertations, along with the added burden of having to be the ones on the front lines fighting against systemic racism in their institutions and their communities. They also have to deal with the reality that they, or a loved one, may be the next George, or Ahmad, or Breonna, or one of many others who have fallen victim to the scourge of racism in America. We say to these students that you are not alone. Not anymore. We stand with you. We kneel with you. We cry with you. We mourn with you. And, we are in this fight alongside you.

NAGPS commits to using its voice, its influence, and its platform to do all in its power to work for and fight for the reality of a just and equitable academia and society. We call on our university leaders to provide meaningful support to the black graduate students and graduate students of color at their universities during this time of racial turmoil. These students are under incredible emotional, psychological, and physical stress and need the support of their institutions. We also call on university leaders and our elected officials to use this as an opportunity to begin the work to uncover, address, and eradicate issues of systemic racism in their institutions and society.

###