

[NEWSROOM](#) | [CALENDAR](#) | [WOFFORD TODAY](#)

Dear Wofford College Department of English Alumni,

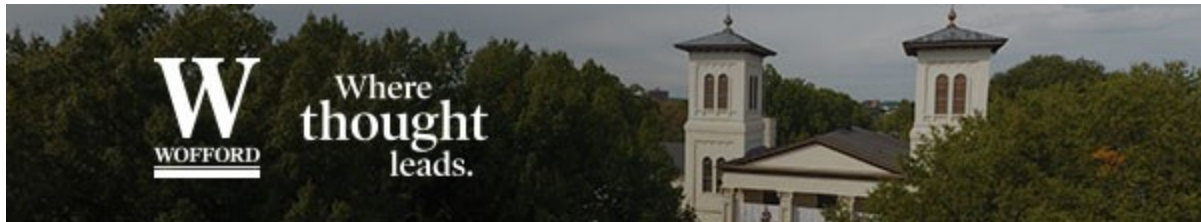
I wanted to share with you the statement below, which was written and distributed by members of the Department of English on June 6, 2020. At the end, you will find links to resources for action and information. You should also feel free to reach out to faculty if you have questions or comments.

Dr. John Ware, chairman

### **STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD AND ENSUING PROTESTS**

As faculty members who teach in the Department of English at Wofford, we write to express our collective outrage and anguish over the horrific murder of George Floyd by four Minneapolis Police officers, the recent murders of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, and the not so recent, but still salient police killings of Freddie Gray, Philando Castille, Laquan McDonald, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice -- and so many others. George Floyd's death is only the most recent case in a four hundred year history of violence against Black people, other people of color and indigenous peoples in the US. We acknowledge this terrible history and see its continuing effects in, among other things, violence at the hands of federal and local law enforcement, white people weaponizing their privilege against people of color, discriminatory housing policies, massive wealth inequality, and disproportionate suffering in public health, as the current COVID-19 crisis has reinforced clearly.

We work in a context with a complex racial history. As a predominantly white institution, whose "Main" building was built by enslaved people; who educated (white) people for 110 years before admitting its first student of color; whose annual cost to attend is more than twice the average annual household income of the majority-minority city in which it has been located since 1854 and in which 45.7% of children live below the federal poverty level; whose tennis courts, Greek village, Senior housing, and the offices that house co-curricular high-impact practices all sit on land that was once a thriving, vibrant community of color, Wofford College has a complicated relationship with Spartanburg. We commit ourselves to acknowledging these land and labor histories in our classes and in our interactions with students,



faculty, staff and the larger Spartanburg community. We believe that Wofford cannot achieve beneficial, equitable, and inclusive relationships without publicly acknowledging that racial inequity is our immediate reality, not simply our historical past. The college must facilitate healing on campus and in our community through real, measurable reparation and transformation—beginning with identifying and addressing systemic, long-term and daily practices that perpetuate white supremacy.

As scholars who work with language and literature, we are especially aware of the way words shape current events. Words are power. We recognize racism is woven into the literature we teach and the language we speak, and we are committed to addressing them in our work. For example, terms like “looters” and “rioters” are being used to undermine or discredit the current protest movement without taking into account their histories. Looting was practiced by white Europeans against Africans for centuries; what became known as American land was looted; rioting is a behavior that can be read as a powerful language to elicit real social change. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “a riot is the language of the unheard”. We reject efforts that seek to restore stability and maintain the status quo over seeking justice.

We commit ourselves to developing ways of teaching that are anti-racist:

- We will ensure our syllabi promote equitable language and policies.
- We will commit to diversifying content in our courses.
- We will cultivate safe spaces in our classroom in which all who are present are affirmed.
- We will work to dismantle racist structures in our classrooms, department, on campus and in our communities.
- We will listen to and uplift voices of color.

Our concern about the effect of these events, this moment, and the cycle of racial violence on our students and colleagues at Wofford College is shared by other Wofford academic and administrative departments, including:

- [Wofford College Campus Union](#)
- [Studio Art/Art History/Theater](#)
- [Sociology and Anthropology](#)
- [The Career Center at Wofford](#)
- Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures
- Student Athlete Advisory Council

## **What You Can Do Now**



- **Attend the “Anti-Racism Teach-In Series”**
  - An Autonomous Black Student Alliance (BSA) Soul Session  
Date/Time: 6/10/2020 1:00:00 PM  
Location: Zoom  
Cost: Free  
Details: This Wofford BSA sponsored session is for Black identifying Wofford students to support and fellowship with one another as we practice uplifting, community practices.  
Please RSVP with this link - <https://bit.ly/WocoAntiRacism101>
  - Anti-Racism 101: An Anti-Racist Toolkit  
Date/Time: 6/11/2020 1:00:00 PM  
Location: Zoom  
Cost: Free  
Details: Are you asking yourself what can you do?? Want to support Black organizers and communities of color in their fight against racial iniquity? Are you inappropriately leaning on your friends of color to help educate you on issues of racial injustice?? Then this Anti-Racism 101 session is for you. Join Dr. Jim Neighbors, Associate Professor for the Department of English and Co-Coordinator of the African/African-American Studies Program, and Erin Keith, a Georgetown Law Grad and Policy Attorney with the Detroit Justice Center on a panel moderated by Dr. Camille Bethea, Associate Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Modern Languages Department. During this session attendees will engage in the deliberate and intentional act of decolonizing contemporary understandings of equity, inclusion and allyship to develop effective methods in disrupting systems of injustice through anti-racist behaviors and actions in attendee's daily, every day lives.

\*Prerequisite to attend Anti-Racism 101: This session is open to all attendees with a willingness and commitment to understand that their dominate identity can be used to center and uplift marginalized voices as equal partners in disrupting racist, oppressive systems of inequity wherever present in contemporary American society.

\*Anti-Racism Resources can be found here: [https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1BRIF2\\_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic](https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic)

Anti-Racist Toolkit Zoom



Meeting ID: 932 3107 3050

Password: BLM

Please RSVP with this link - <https://bit.ly/WocoAntiRacism101>

*For more information, contact Taifha Alexander, Assistant Dean of Students for Diversity and Leadership Development at [alexandertn@wofford.edu](mailto:alexandertn@wofford.edu) or 864-597-4066.*

- **Support Black organizations.**
- **Refer to the following resources for additional context, history, perspectives.**

Signed:

Taifha Alexander, Alan Chalmers, Chris Dinkins, Natalie Grinnell, Kimberly Hall, Sally Hitchmough, Jim Neighbors, Kim Rostan, George Singleton, Carey Voeller, John Ware, Patrick Whitfill, Carol Wilson

June 5, 2020