

CoDP Statement on Violence and Racism Against Black People

June 5, 2020

Black Lives Matter. Like many around the world, the AAPT Committee on Diversity in Physics (CoDP) is outraged by the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade at the hands of police and self-proclaimed vigilantes. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to their families and friends as they mourn for their loved ones, and we commend those constructively disrupting for justice. While these recent deaths have sparked fresh pain, anger, and unrest in this country, we wish to emphasize that violence against Black people in the US is not new.¹ There are far too many named and unnamed Black people who have lost their lives due to police brutality. This violence against Black people is embedded in the history of this country and is an outgrowth of unchecked and systemic racism. As such, we stand in solidarity with the Black community to work for justice and to end racism.

The members of CoDP also acknowledge that racism undergirds wealth, educational, and health disparities which have been so visible during the COVID-19 pandemic and have caused the disproportionately high death rate among Black people, as well as disproportionately high losses of income and other threats to basic human needs. Again, we affirm that Black Lives Matter and we commit to do our part to eliminate these disparities, particularly in our physics spaces.

The mission of the AAPT Committee on Diversity in Physics is to “stand as the voice for marginalized groups within AAPT and the broader scientific community, hearing and responding to the concerns of those in marginalized groups, and working together to find just and equitable solutions to issues of concern around diversity, equity, and inclusion.” We exist because we know that the issues of racism and injustice do not only exist “out there” but are unfortunately pervasive within the physics community.²

As a committee within a professional society for physics educators, we are particularly concerned for our Black members. The societal impacts of racism and injustice on Black educators, students, and researchers are not left at the door of the physics learning space or laboratory.³ We know that members of the physics community have perpetrated racist behavior against Black members of the physics community, including racially profiling Black students and colleagues as “suspicious” or other similar labels. Furthermore, Black people have been and continue to be marginalized in the physics and physics education communities.

To combat these effects, we will:

- Identify and address issues of racism, inequity, and injustice against Black people within our community
- Continue to collaborate with AAPT⁴ to actively work against systemic racism and oppression by:
 - Ensuring equitable participation within leadership positions and for honorifics (e.g., invited speaker positions and awards)
 - Providing a place for AAPT membership to voice concerns where we have failed to be an equitable and inclusive society
 - Advocating for and acting to address these concerns.

- Educating ourselves and members of the physics education community to better understand and address the racism that our students, teachers, researchers, and members face. This includes within conference spaces, classrooms, departments, and institutions.
- Strengthen collaborations with other AAPT committees and external organizations (e.g., The National Society of Black Physicists), as well as participate in solidarity with other movements that forward our goals.
- Ensure that our members have the tools and resources to be and feel safe when participating in AAPT sanctioned events and conferences.

These are our commitments as a committee. While these actions do not directly address anti-Black police brutality, they are important in the fight against racism. The Black members of our community deserve not only to survive but to thrive. We call on the physics and physics education community to act to support Black students, faculty, and staff within their classrooms, institutions, laboratories, and beyond. Additionally, we challenge the physics and physics education community to advocate for and participate in oversight and reform of the police in their institutions and cities/towns to ensure the safety of Black people. Borrowing from the title of the recently published report by the AIP National Task Force to Elevate African American Representation in Undergraduate Physics and Astronomy (TEAM-UP)⁵, now more than ever, *The Time is Now*. And we affirm once again, Black Lives Matter.

--The Members of the 2020 AAPT Committee on Diversity in Physics

Arlene Modeste Knowles, Chair
 Alexis Knaub, Vice Chair
 David Marasco, Past Chair
 Adebajo Oriade, Member
 Benjamin Pollard, Member
 Idaykis Rodriguez, Member
 Chandra Turpen, Member

Resources

1. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6459/1221>
2. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1907.01655.pdf>
3. <https://medium.com/@chanda/what-is-the-plan-for-including-tamir-rice-in-stem-15c1d7a912e>
4. https://www.aapt.org/aboutaapt/Special_Statement_on_Diversity_06032020.cfm
5. <https://www.aip.org/diversity-initiatives/team-up-task-force>