

LACLaS Open Letter to Students and Alumni

Black Lives Matter / Vidas Negras Importan / Vidas Negras Importam / La vie des Afro-descendants importe

Dear all,

We, the faculty and staff of the Program of Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx Studies (LACLaS) at Bowdoin College stand in solidarity with the protests seeking justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement. Structural and state violence against Black people is a hemispheric condition. In Brazil, police killings and disappearances of Amarildo de Souza, João Pedro Matos Pinto, Claudia Silveira Ferreira point to this reality. Over the past two months, we have seen many of our current and former students engaging in these struggles for justice. This letter is to tell you that we see you, and we support you in calling for or responding to the call for action.

Faculty and staff in LACLaS have traditionally contributed to an anti-racist pedagogy in and out of the classroom by designing and supporting courses and co-curricular activities that address students' understanding of their experience with issues of race and racism within and beyond the college. We are invested in making sure our students gain the critical tools allowing them to understand the insidious mechanisms and operations of racism so as to challenge them in turn. We are dedicated to understanding how systematic racism and exclusion brought on by cultural white supremacy in both North and South America has impacted racial justice throughout the hemisphere. And we are invested in addressing the curricular and co-curricular needs of students of color, particularly Latinx, Afro-Latinx, and all students of Caribbean and Latin American descent, at Bowdoin College.

In these times, we feel it is important that you, our partners in education and action, understand how we plan to deepen our commitment to anti-racist pedagogy by highlighting the centrality of anti-Blackness to the culture of white supremacy throughout the Americas. We will enhance our dedication to understanding and recognizing Afro-Latinx and indigenous cultures and histories within our teaching practices. To this end, we have set out the following goals:

1. We will design, in collaboration with students, programming that supports understanding of the current political moment and its antecedents, as well as the short and mid-term actions of both LACLaS faculty and students engaged in political actions towards social change.
2. We will emphasize and enhance the ways in which our existing curricular offerings support the understanding of race, racism, equity and justice in the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America.
3. We will further integrate anti-racist pedagogical practices within our teaching methods and the courses we will offer. We will become better informed of how we can best approach the dismantling of systemic racism within our own teaching practices and classroom spaces.

4. We will continue to seek collaborations with other Programs and Departments that enable us to diversify our course offerings, to better include and represent the legacy of colonialism in the Americas, to better document and challenge anti-Black racism, as well as racism against indigenous people and cultures.
5. We will continue to find opportunities to center Afro-Latinx and indigenous voices in our classrooms and our public programming such as guest lectures, roundtables, and other cultural events.

In solidarity,

Program of Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx Studies, LACLaS (formerly LAS)
Bowdoin College