

Statement of Russian Studies Faculty in Solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement

We, faculty and affiliated faculty members of the Russian Department at Bowdoin College, stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement against racism and police brutality. We mourn the deaths of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, and so many others, and we are anguished by this nation's pervasive and systemic injustices perpetrated against black, Indigenous and other people of color communities.

Although current events in the United States may appear outside our department's purview, the region of the world we study has much to teach us about the dangers and cruelties of authoritarian, imperialistic, and colonial regimes and societal passivity in the face of injustice. Yet Russian culture and history also provide ample opportunity to become acquainted with the courage and dignity of ordinary humans who resist those cruelties—whether through word or deed—and who insist on the enduring superiority of individual and collective human goodness, creativity, and inborn freedom over all manifestations of state-sponsored repression and violence.

We therefore pledge our commitment to amplifying these voices of resistance and to highlighting the ways in which the moral imperative they uphold is relevant to our own society and our own time. We likewise pledge to strengthen an explicit focus in our course content and programming on the legacies and dangers of authoritarianism, how systems of oppression are created and sustained by silence and fear, and how violence and the threat of violence are wielded as an instrument by the powerful against the powerless. Finally, we commit ourselves to fostering greater inclusivity in our classes, our materials, and our larger academic communities. We hear and support our students of color in their anger and their grief, and we commit to working toward a safer, more equitable, and more just world for them, and for us all.

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