



In light of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the numerous people whose lives have been cut short by anti-Black violence, the staff of the Presbyterian Historical Society stands in support of Black people and People of Color, and against white supremacy and police brutality.

As keepers of history, we have a responsibility to not only document what has happened in the past but to recognize the history we are living through today. Standing in solidarity with Black and Brown communities who are fighting against systemic racism is not only the right thing to do, it is the only thing to do. Social justice lies at the very core of what we do as archivists. We preserve, protect, and share the records of the American Presbyterian experience so that future generations can learn and be inspired by that history to change the world for the better.

We recognize that this is a crucial moment in American history and, as such, a crucial moment in the history of our institution. It is a moment when we can and will re-evaluate ourselves and our practices and start the courageous conversations that are long overdue.\* We recognize that we are an institution run by white people; affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which is 88% white; and working in a profession that is over 80% white. Coming to terms with those numbers and their implications for the work we do, and the audiences we reach, is long overdue but necessary work.

We've made some small steps in recent years toward addressing problems related to institutional racism, including seeking out the records of African American leaders and congregations; increasing representation of Black people on our Board of Directors; and being more intentional in our outreach to and welcome of Black visitors. However, the Church we belong to and the principles we uphold as part of the archives/library community call us to do better.

The staff of the Presbyterian Historical Society commits to:

1. Making our building and connected spaces welcoming to Black people and People of Color.
2. Confronting the gaps in our collecting and storytelling practices. Developing a lecture series that informs and inspires both staff and the communities we serve in the field of social justice.
3. Revisiting our institutional history and descriptive practices, especially where PHS or the PC(USA) and its predecessor denominations have caused harm to Black lives and failed to collect the history of Black Presbyterians.
4. Being more aware of how the material culture that defines our space is problematic, from the statues in front of our building to the gentrification that allowed the Church to purchase the land for our building.
5. Asking congregations to share with us sermons and stories that document their congregation's response to and involvement in the movement to end racial injustice.
6. Introducing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to careers in the library and archives profession.

In the days since George Floyd's murder and ensuing protests, institutions and individuals across the U.S. have begun to reckon with their complicity in racist systems. The time for good but silent intentions is past. The late issuance of this statement in support of the national protests is one example of us being silent for too long, and for that, we apologize. To ensure this doesn't happen again we are reviewing our methods of communication so that staff feels comfortable bringing to the forefront issues that need to be prioritized.

In closing we are working to ensure that in thought, action, and deed, we recognize every day that Black Lives Matter.

Sincerely,

The PHS Staff

*\*In implicit bias training, a “courageous conversation” is one in which participants are encouraged to express their views openly and truthfully, rather than defensively or with the purpose of laying blame. Integral to courageous conversations is a willingness to learn.*

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## PHS Resources

- [African American History Collection](#)
- [African American Leaders and Congregations Collecting Initiative](#)
- [Presbyterians and the Civil Rights Movement](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) statements and racial justice resources](#)

## Other Resources

- [AORTA \(Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance\) resource list](#)
- [JSTOR’s syllabus on institutionalized racism](#)
- [Quaker resource list on addressing white privilege](#)
- [Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture “Talking About Race” web portal](#)
- [Society of American Archivists’ free, online course on cultural diversity competence](#)

## Books

- *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* by Jennifer Harvey (Eerdmans)
- *The End of Policing* by Alex S. Vitale (Verso Books)
- *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* by Angela Y. Davis (Haymarket Books)
- *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot* by Mikki Kendall (Viking)
- *How To Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi (Penguin Random House)
- *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* by Andrea J. Ritchie (Beacon Press)
- *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (The New Press)
- *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele (St. Martin’s Press)
- *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon Press)