WGSS Statement of Solidarity and Action
June 8, 2020

We mourn, honor, and celebrate the lives of the named black women, children, men, trans people killed by police and systemic racism and those unnamed that date back for centuries. We say the names of too many and most recently, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Nina Pop, Sean Reed, and Maurice Gordon.

Today and everyday, we stand with black community organizers and protesters affirming their right to justice and breath, those who affirm black lives, and those who assemble and express their grievances with structural state violence. We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name, Black Trans Lives Matter, Black Queer Lives Matter and the many black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) community organized groups that were founded in love and seek freedom & liberation. There is no path forward for this nation and for our program than to bring to center black lives and black writers, thinkers, scholars, practitioners, artists, and activists.

The WGSS Program at Allegheny College is outraged at the continued structural and systemic violence against black people and all people of color at the hands of law enforcement. Racism is endemic to everyday life and every institution of our nation, including higher education.

We also recognize the trauma of structural racism and state violence. We affirm that both processes of resistance and resilience require self-care and time for individual and collective healing.

As a predominantly white program within a predominantly white institution, we re-commit to doing the work of dismantling oppressions. We re-commit to unlearning racism and learning and re-learning antiracist and decolonizing approaches to creating our syllabi, classrooms, and interactions and relationships with people in our communities.

Here are some concrete steps the WGSS program commits itself to in the coming weeks, months, and years:

- Supporting black students, and all students of color, and this begins by listening with care.
- Continuously educating and re-educating ourselves on racial violence, injustice, systemic racism, white fragility, antiracism, and white supremacy/nationalism to examine the language we use and the environments we create around us.
- When given the opportunity, WGSS will hire faculty of color.
- The WGSS program will support and work closely with black faculty and faculty of color across campus, listening carefully and bringing to the center their teaching and scholarly work while supporting their experiences and success on our campus.
• We will continue to speak up and contribute to a process that addresses institutional and individual iterations of racism that create hostile working environments for students, staff, and faculty.
• The WGSS program will use its upcoming self-study, in part, to review and revise the core curriculum to bring to center black writers, thinkers, artists, scientists, activists, narratives, policy makers, histories and antiracist theory and practices.
• We will continue to work self-reflexively to put theory into practice reaffirming that intersectionality and transnationality are deeply needed feminist-queer intellectual-political-community projects that exist because of black feminist-lesbian coalitions.
• In our teaching and/or research, we will cite black women, queer, trans, and genderqueer scholars and scholars of color.
• The WGSS program will use its platform to work in solidarity with the Black Studies program, invest in its growth, find ways for collaboration, and support this long-standing program institutionally.

Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation. My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, not guilt. Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures.