The following statement has been provisionally proposed by the CAAS Board for formal approval at a Board meeting to be held on June 23, 2020:

We, the educators and scholars in secondary schools, colleges, and universities who make up the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, condemn the blatant disregard for the lives and dignity of Black people demonstrated most recently in the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, and in countless other instances of systemic racism. We stand in solidarity with the Black community, with the positive, progressive change championed by Black Lives Matter and all who are striving for a more just, anti-racist and humane society. And we affirm our commitment to examine truthfully the deplorable aspects of our discipline’s history.

The Classical Association of the Atlantic States was founded in 1907 to support the teaching and research of the languages and cultures of ancient Greece, Rome and the Mediterranean area in the mid-Atlantic states. While the study and teaching of Mediterranean antiquity are historical pursuits, they are always tied to the present, conveying, implicitly or explicitly, what we find valuable about this area of study. Along with other organizations that promote the study of Classics in the United States, CAAS recognizes that the discipline of Classical Studies has throughout its history played an outsized role in, and benefitted overtly from, promoting the racist and anti-Black narrative that continues to result in countless acts of violence against African Americans and other People of Color in our society.

We therefore commit ourselves to the task of recalibrating our scholarship and pedagogy through specific programs of action designed to foster inclusivity and promote racial justice in all learning environments. This will include augmenting the various programs that CAAS already operates which are directed towards diversity, equity and inclusion, and creating new initiatives with similar goals.

We also commit ourselves to diversifying the population of students, teachers, and researchers engaging with the Ancient Mediterranean, to promote racial justice in—and equal access to—all learning environments, and to make heard the voices of classicists of color in both research and pedagogy. We pledge to identify, discuss and challenge historical narratives that promulgate white supremacy, whitewash the Mediterranean, promote a false notion of a
supposedly superior “Western Civilization,” downplay the brutality of slavery, and obfuscate our own discipline and society’s participation in forms of systemic oppression whose roots frequently reach back to antiquity. Finally, we commit ourselves to listening to, and learning from, members of CAAS who are Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color. At the same time, we firmly acknowledge the outsized burdens placed on our colleagues who are Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color, not only, but especially in the present moment.

We are aware that this statement can only be provisional until it includes explicit action points and a clear timeline for their implementation. The CAAS Board will be meeting in late June to discuss specific plans that will include augmenting the various programs that CAAS already operates which are directed towards diversity, equity and inclusion, and creating new initiatives. The Board will notify the membership of any decisions and progress in July.