

CAAS Board Statement on Anti-Racism - Updated

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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, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, and in countless other instances of systemic racism throughout U.S. history. We stand in unequivocal solidarity with the Black community, with Black Lives Matter and with 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 narratives that continue 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.

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 oppression with roots that 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 immense burdens placed on our colleagues who are Black, not only, but especially in the present moment when the Covid-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on communities of color as a result of systemic racism.

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 has approved and is in the process of assembling a committee charged with formulating plans for both immediate and long-term actions to address racism and anti-Blackness in our discipline. The committee will reach out

to the membership, consult experts, and then present a report to the Board by September, at which point the Board will begin implementing the committee's recommendations immediately.