Anthropology and Environment Statement on Black Lives Matters and Environmental Racism

Anthropology and Environment Society (A & E) joins our fellow AAA sections in condemning the recent reprehensible killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, David McAtee, Tony McDade, and so many other Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). We stand in solidarity with the #BLM movement and all actions working to end systemic/structural racism, appropriation, and oppression. We contest all racist media descriptions and portrayals of these uprisings.

As environmental anthropologists, we understand that violence against people and violence against the environment are systemic and always happening together. BIPOC communities are disproportionately constrained to spaces of high environmental risk and low access to environmental goods. Toxic environments underpin the extreme impacts of COVID on Black communities, as they contribute to patterns of compromised health and put Black people more at risk for exposure to the virus, while barring them access to adequate health care. Spatial segregation is likewise the basis of racist police violence, as it facilitates the targeting of Black communities for surveillance and control by heavily armed officers. People in these communities are more often treated as criminals -- whose lives and bodies are devalued -- than as citizens -- to be protected and served.

Meaningful solutions to environmental problems must work to dismantle this and all kinds of environmental racism. We thus add our voices to current calls for redirecting resources toward life-sustaining infrastructure for BIPOC communities and support for community-determined environmental care and relations. We accept our responsibility to dismantle systemic racial inequalities and exclusions within the discipline, our institutions, and our communities. We reaffirm our commitments to listening to, learning from, and collaborating with people most impacted by environmental racism, including violent policing. And because environmental racism perpetuates white supremacy, we commit to the ongoing work of decolonizing Environmental Anthropology. Among other things, this entails centering the voices of BIPOC scholars, particularly women, who are extending the ways we think about environmental knowledge and environmental justice.

Toward these goals, we will build on current A & E initiatives such as and Engagement and the Ancestor Project, along with Citation Matters, a syllabus for decolonizing Environmental Anthropology published by the Society for Cultural Anthropology. We will also pursue them through our section's awards and mentoring programs. We will work with our members in doing anti-racist and decolonizing work in our research and the institutions where we work, teach, and study. We will soon be updating our website to include resource links for anti-racist environmentalism. We will also be reaching out to colleagues and collaborators for ideas and
recommendations of how best to sustain this crucially important work in the coming months and years.

----------------------------------
On behalf of the Anthropology and Environment Board
Jim Igoe, Section President
----------------------------------