

Five College Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Certificate
Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter
June 30, 2020

The Five College Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Certificate (RHRJ Certificate) stands in solidarity with the [Movement for Black Lives](#) and against all forms of white supremacy and systematic racism.

When George Floyd called out for his mother during his dying moments, he made concrete what reproductive justice advocates have long argued—that police violence is a reproductive justice issue.¹ The state murder of Black men, women,² trans and non-binary people, and children interferes with one of the key tenants of reproductive justice – the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments.³ The epidemic of police violence and brutality—where Black people are killed by police at a rate two and a half times that of whites—must end. Black parents, and especially Black mothers, should not have to bury any more of their children. Moving out of the United States must no longer be a strategy to protect Black children from death.⁴

But police violence is only one way that reproductive justice is denied Black people, and all people of color. Black women are 243% more likely to die in childbirth than white women and Black babies are more likely to end up in intensive care.⁵ Once their children are born,⁶ Black mothers are more likely to lose them to state foster care systems than other mothers and more likely to raise them in environments that are unsafe, from contaminated air and drinking water to food deserts. Mass incarceration also interferes with the right of women to parent their children. Although 60% of incarcerated women have children under the age of 18, Black women are imprisoned at twice the rate as white women.⁷ Black women are also disproportionately burdened and harmed when abortion is regulated with waiting

¹ See e.g., [Reproductive Justice for Black Lives](#) (#rj4blacklives seeks to connect, educate and mobilize reproductive health, rights and justice advocates in support of Black liberation); Imani Perry, *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* (2019); Renee Bracey Sherman, “[The Right to \(Black\) Life](#),” *New York Times* (Aug. 9, 2017); Julia Craven, “[For Black Women, Police Violence and Reproductive Injustice often Intersect](#),” *Huff Post* (June 27, 2017); Leslie Watson Malachi, “[Police Violence is a Reproductive Justice Issue](#),” *Cosmopolitan* (July 18, 2016); Kenrya Rankin, “[Black Lives Matter Partners With Reproductive Justice Groups to Fight for Black Women](#),” *Colorlines* (Feb. 9, 2016); Arnetta Rogers, “[How Police Brutality Harms Mothers: Linking Police Violence to the Reproductive Justice Movement](#),” 12 *Hastings Race & Poverty L.J.* 205 (2015); and Dani McClain, “[The Murder of Black Youth is a Reproductive Justice Issue](#),” *The Nation* (Aug. 13, 2014).

² [SayHerName Campaign](#), bringing “awareness to the often invisible names and stories of Black women and girls who have been victimized by racist police violence.”

³ Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, pg. 9 (2017).

⁴ Imani Bashir, “[Living Abroad Is My Way of Prolonging My Black Son’s Life](#),” *New York Times* (May 29, 2020).

⁵ Dana-Ain Davis, *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy and Premature Birth* (2019); Linda Villarosa, “[Why America’s Black Mothers and Babies are in a Life or Death Crisis](#),” *New York Times* (April 11, 2018); Nina Martin and Renee Montange, [Nothing Protects Black Women From Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth](#), *Pro Publica* (Dec. 7, 2017).

⁶ Laura Briggs, *Taking Children: A History of American Terror* (2020); Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (2003).

⁷ The Sentencing Project, “[Incarcerated Women and Girls](#)” (June 6, 2019).

periods, physician admitting privilege requirements, and other restrictive laws.⁸ Black women make less money than other working women and are more likely to face housing discrimination, employment discrimination and sexual harassment, which harms their ability to financially provide for their children. These are but a few ways that the vestiges of slavery, settler colonialism, systemic racism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy—both historical and contemporary—stand in opposition to the hope of reproductive justice.⁹

The RHRJ Certificate is committed to supporting students, faculty (contingent and non-contingent), and staff of color, particularly Black faculty, students, and staff, and aims to cultivate intellectual and activist spaces that investigate issues of systemic racism, white supremacy and reproductive rights and justice. We express our solidarity with Black Lives Matter, not just as a matter of sentiment, but also as concrete actions as we strive to be an anti-racist program by elevating the voices and experiences of Black people, indigenous people, and other people of color. In the upcoming academic year, 2020-21, the RHRJ Certificate program will:

1. Continue to offer classes that directly address systemic racism, white supremacy and reproductive rights and justice. These Fall 2020 Certificate courses take up these issues:

- Indigenous Feminisms (Amherst College)
- Bad Black Women (Amherst College)
- Race, Gender and Sexuality (Amherst College)
- Contemporary Debates-Immigration (Amherst College)
- Creating Families (Hampshire)
- 'Who's Involved?: Participatory Governance, Emerging Technologies and Feminism' (Mt. Holyoke College)
- Women and Gender in Islam (Mt. Holyoke College)
- Race, Racism and Power (Mt. Holyoke College)
- Latina Feminism(s) (Mt. Holyoke College)
- Decolonizing US Women's History (Smith College)
- Feminist, Queer, and Disability Studies (Smith College)
- White Supremacy in the Age of Trump (Smith College)
- Politics of Reproduction (Umass)
- Black Love, Sex, and Marriage in the United States (Umass)
- Gender & Difference-Critical Analysis (Umass)
- History Sexuality & Race in the United States (UMass)
- Rape and Representation (UMass)
- Imagining Justice (Umass)

⁸ [Amicus Brief of Reproductive Justice Scholars](#) filed in *June Medical Services v. Russo* (Dec. 2, 2019); [Amicus Brief of Individuals and Organizations Dedicated to the Fight for Reproductive Justice](#) filed in *June Medical Services v. Russo* (Dec. 2, 2019).

⁹ Alys Eve Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism's Philosophy of History* (2019); Khiara Bridges, *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (2011); Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* (1998).

2. Host at least one community event, via in-person or Zoom, that addresses police violence and brutality as a reproductive justice issue
3. Award our two annual Course Enhancement Grants of up to \$1,000 each to faculty members who are developing a new Certificate course or enhancing an existing Certificate course to address reproductive justice, white supremacy and/or racism
4. Focus the meetings of the [Five College Reproductive Politics Faculty Seminar](#) on issues of race, systemic racism, and white supremacy.
5. Collectively support the hiring, retention, tenure and promotion of Black women faculty members and other women of color at the Five Colleges, particularly those whose scholarship and teaching focuses on reproduction, African-American history, and/or histories of racism and white supremacy, and to support programs that help faculty, students, and staff of color thrive in the Five Colleges.