

An Open Letter: In Solidarity against Racism

June 7, 2020

Dear Friends,

We hope that this message finds you safe and healthy in these turbulent times in which different crises currently combine to show us, once again, the systemic and institutionalized racism of politics, economy and society in the United States. Along with the rest of the world, we have been outraged and deeply affected by recent events. The killing of George Floyd and the violent response of the police against mourning and protesting demonstrators are appalling and troubling. We are therefore reaffirming our commitment to support the struggle against racism and anti-Blackness here and elsewhere on the globe.

The NCGS Steering Committee is committed to countering racism, anti-Blackness, and violence at home, in Europe, particularly Germany, and across the world. We aim to foster dialogue on, and broaden the visibility of, resources about the history of structural racism, anti-Black violence, and many related issues.

Germany's twentieth century history has much to teach us about the rise of Nazism and more current populist right wing movements and their inherent racism, as well as about the persistence of structural racism and the difficulty of combating it. It shows that the only way forward is to address and study, without any hesitation, the dark past—discussing it in public, even if this courts controversy, in order to teach not only students but also the broader public. This was and is a painful process for the racially discriminated, suppressed, and killed minorities: in twentieth century German history mainly, but not only, Jewish people. It is also painful, and necessary, for the descendants of the discriminating, suppressing, and persecuting majority, who are not only forced to confront the history of their ancestors, but also their own prejudices and ongoing, often unwitting, racist thinking and behavior. German history also shows that a democratic civil society, including critical media and very active grassroots movements, are needed to foster change. In Germany, as in the United States, this work is not complete, as right-wing populism, xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism are rising again.

We therefore strongly support the current movement of the Black community and their interracial coalitions in the United States whose members have been trying to come to terms with their pain, anger, sadness, and frustration over a struggle against racism and inequality that has persisted on American soil since the seventeenth century. Everybody who stands behind this agenda needs to support this movement and listen and learn from its proponents. Its calls can and should not be ignored any longer.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the

The NCGS Steering Committee

Dr. James Chappel (Duke University)
Dr. Karen Hagemann (UNC Chapel Hill) (Speaker)
Dr. Konrad H. Jaraus (UNC Chapel Hill)
Dr. Priscilla Layne (UNC Chapel Hill)
Dr. Jakob Norberg (Duke University)
Dr. Thomas Pegelow-Kaplan (Appalachian State University)
Dr. Andrea Sinn (Elon University)

[Interview with Dr. Priscilla Layne \(UNC Chapel Hill\) on racism in the United States on the German television talk show "Maischberger" of the public station ARD on June 3, 2020](#)