



GROUP FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN SOCIAL WORK

**GADE Statement on Anti-Racism
June 12, 2020**

The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE) strongly denounces the murders of Mr. George Floyd, Ms. Breonna Taylor, and the many other unarmed African Americans and others who have died due to police violence. GADE is in full solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and with allied students, faculty, staff members, and families. GADE stands with the Society for Social Work and Research, Council on Social Work Education, National Association of Social Workers, the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, and professional organizations in other disciplines in calling for the dismantling of systemic racism, police brutality, and White supremacy. The system that supports White supremacy and oppresses people of color must end and make way for the just and equitable treatment of all. As the organization charged with advancing excellence in social work doctoral education and preparing future social work leaders, GADE pledges to support and promote systemic change in our own organization, the institutions in which we work, and the larger communities in which we live.

George Floyd's murder represents an ongoing and reprehensible American legacy of unarmed African American men killed by police officers. According to a study by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, police violence is the sixth leading cause of death for young Black men in the US and a leading cause of death for other people of color including Latinx and Native American men and women, and immigrants (Edwards, Lee, & Esposito, 2019¹). Police brutality is a public health crisis, a crisis of democracy, and an unacceptable violation of human rights.

GADE recognizes that African American men, women and their families are disproportionately victimized by these atrocities and that systemic racism is the root cause of these tragedies and subsequent trauma. Despite efforts to reduce and eliminate racism, racism continues to be a "grand challenge" for America and must be a core concern of the social work profession. The legacy of American slavery, followed by decades of racist laws and practices blocking full political participation and enabling discrimination in housing, employment, education, social services, and everyday social life, has been fueled by the lie that people of African descent are intellectually and morally inferior. This notion has been institutionalized in the marginalization and oppression of people of color throughout all contemporary American systems and organizations, including higher education. In academia, including social work academe, racism can manifest in admissions, hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions and the belief that African American students and professors are not fully suited for intellectual pursuits, or that their place

¹ Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (August 20, 2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race-ethnicity, and sex. *PNAS*, 116 (34), 16793-16798. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116>

in the academy is unearned. Moreover, because of their racial bias and dubious validity, the measures of excellence prominently used in academia to evaluate student quality and achievement reinforce this stigmatization. Further, racism can show itself in the form of tokenism and its consequences that include professional isolation and lack of support.

GADE promotes socially just research and condemns the subtle and at times explicit racism found in social science, including social work research. Racism in social science and social work research can be manifested by the research questions posed, theories and methods used, samples selected, and interpretations provided. Racism in social science is also evident in the use of research to uphold and support institutions that exist outside or even in opposition to the needs of communities of color. To the extent that research is a subjective enterprise influenced in part by racist ideas, human subjectivity through interpretation remains a major avenue through which racism is sustained.

GADE promotes a teaching of historical and contemporary social work that critically engages the contributions of Black scholars and other scholars of color and other marginalized groups and that exposes doctoral students to the robust and consequential work of practitioners, activists, policy makers, and others within these communities. Black social work pioneers, underscoring the “triple jeopardy” of gender, class, and race, were some of the first to recognize the critical role of intersectionality to deepened understanding. They embraced an ethic of collectivism and interconnection and self-preservation, and modeled the dynamic interplay between theory and practice (Bent-Goodley, Snell, & Carlton-LaNey, 2017²). Dorothy Height reminded us in her 1989 reflection that the Civil Rights movement “was not a new event so much as a continuation of an old tradition” in the Black community (Height, 1989³). Understanding this history and applying it to contemporary critique and analysis is essential to the establishment of a rigorous social work education. Such a focus makes us better scholars and it strengthens and expands our knowledge base.

It is the mission of GADE to promote rigor in doctoral education in social work and prepare the next generation of scholars, researchers, and educators who function as stewards of the discipline. GADE commits to using our resources to support anti-racist doctoral training that promotes diversity, inclusion and equity; raises the voices of students of color; pursues research that is socially just; supports historically underrepresented or marginalized student groups; and actively resists and eradicates unjust policies and practices within our institutions and in society.

To achieve these ends, GADE takes the following positions:

1. The organization will use its resources to support doctoral training that:
 - Centers racism as a core area of study.
 - Encourages, promotes, and draws upon the scholarship of people of African descent and other scholars of color and marginalized groups as a source of knowledge.

² Bent-Goodley, T., Snell, C. L. & Carlton-LaNey, I. (2017) Black perspectives and social work practice, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 27(1-2), 27-35, DOI: [10.1080/10911359.2016.1252604](https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2016.1252604)

³ Height, Dorothy (1989). Self-Help — A Black Tradition. *The Nation* 249 (4), 136-38..

- Provides course content along with opportunities that address systemic racism, oppression, and White supremacy in order to empower the next generation of social work educators, researchers and professionals to dismantle institutional racism, and to embrace diversity, inclusion, and equity.
 - Prepares doctoral students with the skills to both disseminate scholarship within the academic community and enhance the public impact of their scholarship so that it becomes a tool to support communities' efforts to make needed changes.
 - Prepares students to conduct socially just and anti-racist research, and in particular research that focuses on how racism, and its various indicators, perpetuates economic, social, and political inequalities and contributes to a host of problems for people of color.
 - Mentors and supports students of color (as well as those from other marginalized and oppressed groups) to become strong scholars who will add their perspectives and voices to the knowledge base.
2. GADE encourages member institutions to examine their admission requirements, remove barriers and promote the recruitment and admittance of students of color.
 3. GADE urges member institutions to revisit programmatic policies and procedures to provide support for historically underrepresented or marginalized student groups and determine their effects on the retention and graduation rates of these students.
 4. GADE encourages member institutions to provide a learning environment that is free from discrimination or harassment, rewards socially just and socially engaged scholarship, and is actively anti-racist.
 5. GADE supports the elimination of racism as one of the Social Work Grand Challenges established by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.
 6. GADE encourages members to advocate for more funding at the local, state and federal levels for research on the deleterious effects of systemic racism on social and mental health outcomes.

GADE is committed to preparing doctoral students as rigorous scholars, researchers, and educators who, in the words of Harry Specht, “*will continue to be the caretakers of the consciousness of the community*” and follow the courageous practices of Whitney Moore Young Jr. to “*support the strong, give courage to the timid, remind the indifferent, and warn the opposed*” when rectifying institutional bias, systemic racism and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity. As social workers, we should “*specialize in the wholly impossible*” as Black social work pioneers, like Nannie Helen Burroughs, showed could be done.

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