

Western Washington University Department of Linguistics
Racial Justice Statement
(working document)
June 2020

We in the Department of Linguistics are raising our voices in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and protestors across the U.S. We must stand together and speak out against the dehumanization of and violence against Black people by police. Linguistics has a lot to offer in fighting and organizing against anti-Blackness, both in outreach and understanding the power of language in racial justice and the discourse surrounding it. At the same time, we recognize the importance of acknowledging the systemic anti-Blackness that has pervaded and influenced both the history of our discipline and the U.S.

We recognize that the makeup and activities of this department do not currently center the experiences and interests of Black lives and language to the degree they should. It's important to us that our department is not only a welcoming place for everyone, intolerant of discrimination, but that we are actively working to dismantle power structures that serve to discriminate against underrepresented populations.

Inspired by the [LSA's statement on race](#) and the [University of Oregon Department of Linguistics Racial Justice Statement](#), we will increase efforts and officially, systemically prioritize specific actions that reflect these values and beliefs:

- Strengthen our curriculum by revising our syllabi and course materials to reflect the diversity of voices in the field ([Scholars to Read in the Field of Language](#)). We believe this is essential to our core curriculum and extends beyond the courses that focus on language diversity and power differentials. In addition to the voices of researchers and communities, we will continue to promote language diversity in our courses.
- Create a survey for students which will include questions about departmental climate. The survey will be followed by transparent reporting of the results and access to relevant resources for students, faculty, and staff.
- Increase discussion of and engagement with [works and initiatives about anti-racism in Linguistics](#), such as those by [Anne H. Charity-Hudley](#) on [fostering a culture of racial inclusion in linguistics](#).
- Continue to identify creative pathways of support for students of a wide variety of backgrounds to participate in our department, thrive in it, and shape it to the benefit of themselves, their communities, and their careers.
- Continue to conduct outreach and engage in discussion with the Western community about discrimination based on language and identity.

While we reflect on the actions we as a department can take in this time, we urge everyone who shares an interest in linguistics to reflect on actions you as individuals can take to continue to fight for justice.