

## **A Joint Statement From ILA and the Editors of *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *The Reading Teacher***

The May 25 murder of George Floyd, a Black man, by a White police officer as three others from the police department of Minneapolis stood by and watched demonstrated once again that racial injustice in United States law enforcement is systemic and pervasive.

As academics—and as human beings—we are horrified by the historic, ongoing, and continued violence against Black people in the U.S.

We are angry that in addition to economic, political, and educational marginalization, the murder of innocent and unarmed Black men, women, and children continues to occur on a regular basis.

There is no excuse for this.

We are members of a vibrant, thoughtful, and caring academic community. It is our responsibility to work together to create a more racially just society and world. And we know that as an international community of scholars, we can have a much more pronounced effect together than as isolated individuals.

Without a collective denunciation and a well-specified call to action, injustice will continue.

A great deal of the pain, frustration, and anger felt by many is rooted in the extreme inequality that characterizes our world. It is no accident that trillions of dollars are quickly appropriated to bolster powerful economic interests, but marginalized communities find access to virtual learning contexts challenging and teachers often spend their own very limited funds to care for their students.

Over the course of our academic careers, we have been the beneficiaries of the contributions made by our Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) colleagues, in both our home institutions and in academe at large. The intellectual and scholarly contributions of BIPOC individuals have brought a myriad of benefits to our own work and these individuals have expanded the larger knowledge base concerning what we know about literacy, how to teach it, and how to better prepare teachers to do their work.

And yet there are far too few BIPOC scholars and students in academia.

Over the course of our careers, we have benefited from important work that pushes on hegemonic views of literacy learning and valuing. Hearing the voices of marginalized learners, considering broader views of literacy, and vocalizing strength-based versus deficit perspectives has grounded our work with teacher candidates, teachers, and students, and framed our own research. This work has informed our foundational understandings of what it means to be literate—and to value this literacy—within different communities. But there are also far too few scholarly works or even funded projects with this aim.

Addressing these inequities is critical to bringing about a more racially just society and world. The only way we can do that is to move beyond talk and commit to taking action.

More specifically, we need to do the following:

### **1. Acknowledge, value, and support BIPOC colleagues and students.**

This work involves learning about histories of oppression, practicing anti-racist behaviors, and participating in just causes. It also involves looking beyond traditional research positions to see value in challenges to hegemonic positions and expansion of research methods. Last, it involves mentoring as well as actively promoting and collaborating with BIPOC scholars.

ILA's journals will activate this by promoting and supporting BIPOC scholars, including authors and editorial board members. We will do this by disseminating the work of BIPOC scholars through social media and other distribution outlets, as well as by providing more mentoring support to BIPOC scholars who hope to publish in ILA's journals.

### **2. Find ways to encourage and initiate more literacy research submissions that focus on supporting BIPOC communities.**

As journal editors, we are calling for manuscripts that provide deeper and better understandings of literacy and its role vis-à-vis BIPOC communities. We specifically ask researchers to submit manuscripts that highlight the voices and experiences of marginalized students, teachers, and underrepresented communities, as well as take a strength-based view.

We have worked to make ILA journals a place where all methods and perspectives can find a home, but we are not receiving the volume of submissions needed in this vein. Recruiting and serving as reviewers allows us to fast-track submissions and adjudicate work with as much speed as we are capable.

### **3. Get involved in efforts to fund more literacy research that addresses inequities across racial groups.**

All funding agencies depend on us as literacy researchers to tell them what work is worthy of recognition and support. We can and should make this a priority. ILA journals will support this by publishing more work by BIPOC scholars that attends to experiences of marginalized communities, which we hope will fuel interest and support of scholars applying for such grants.

### **4. Increase the quality of literacy instruction grounded in representative curricular materials supported by research that addresses the specific needs of BIPOC teachers and students.**

Right now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional literacy instruction for students from nondominant communities has to a large extent ceased or slackened. Unless we can figure out ways to better provide this instruction (through digital devices, access to the internet, curriculum that meets the needs of BIPOC students), the literacy learning needs of BIPOC students will suffer. Again, we believe that our community of literacy researchers is uniquely well-positioned to address this need.

The time to act is now. #BlackLivesMatter. BIPOC scholars, practitioners, and students matter. Consider this our call to action.

We have shared the words that we have regarding these frustratingly persistent systems of inequity as well as the unacceptable consequence they have on Black lives.

We write this from different positions of privilege with the goal of committing to working with our BIPOC colleagues to make sure their voices are heard and to make sure the voices of marginalized communities are heard.

We are also committed to listening and learning and acting upon additional steps to get us closer to a world that we are proud to live, work, and lead within.

This journey requires the expertise, intellect, and commitment of the literacy research community. So, please—join us in this work. And never stop challenging us to do more.

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