

Black Lives Matter

The Department of Social Work at Shepherd University unequivocally affirms that Black Lives Matter, supports the aims of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, and asserts the profound importance of people of color to the past, present and future of our country.

In keeping with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers, social workers are called to work against “discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice” (NASW, 2017, p.1). Racism has functioned as a historical and economic foundation in the United States, creating systems and structures designed to discriminate and “normalize” the oppression of people of color. As our communities have cried out against the murder of George Floyd by a White police officer, the outcry is also a reaction to the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Filando Castile, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Atatiana Jefferson, and countless more. We cannot be agents of social change while ignoring the historical legacy of White violence perpetrated against Black and Brown individuals and communities.

As social work educators we acknowledge the necessity of anti-oppression/anti-racism education as a means to prepare social work students to both recognize and challenge our own biases and those of the systems and institutions in which we live and work. We collectively pledge ourselves to continue to work toward the Beloved Community envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by combating hate with love, dismantling oppressive systems, and promoting social justice and equality in our actions and in our curriculum.

We commit to do the following:

- To assemble a committee with the function of reviewing the Department of Social Work's curriculum and teaching practices in collaboration with faculty in the following areas:
 - Material and instruction on recognizing and challenging structural/systemic oppression
 - A critical analysis of social work's historical role as both a catalyst for change and a force for maintenance of the status quo.
 - Active incorporation of course materials that center the perspectives of traditionally marginalized populations, academics, activists, and writers.
- Upon receipt of recommendations from the committee, to incorporate the feedback into social work curriculum and instruction.
- To design and implement a 3-credit course focused on racism and structural oppression that will be offered in the spring semester of 2021.
- To develop a report for release in summer of 2021 that outlines what specific actions were taken and what goals for further action have been set for the coming academic year.

We fervently urge you to stand with us in the struggle for the soul of a nation!