



July 27, 2020

International and Area Studies unequivocally rejects the racism and violence that remain deeply rooted in American society, and we acknowledge the pain and mourning of the diverse communities of which we are a part. The recent deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police combined with the inordinate toll that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic continues to take on communities of color have laid bare the reality of structural racism and the pervasive and ongoing effects of generations of inequality.

Structural racism and systemic inequality are not unique to modern America. They are global afflictions. Because ignorance and isolation create fertile ground for hatred and bigotry, IAS promotes critical inquiry, language study, and cultural exchange both here at the U and around the globe.

Yet access to these opportunities is not equal. We operate in an historically and still predominantly white institution. Our programs reflect all too often the structural racism, white privilege, and other forms of inequality that remain endemic in the university and in American society broadly. While students of color make up almost half of all undergraduates at American colleges and universities, they constitute barely thirty percent of those who study abroad. Without concrete actions to change how we do our work, our programs will continue to perpetuate entrenched racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequalities.

IAS needs to become not simply a supportive organization but an anti-racist one. To that end—and among a range of initiatives—we will commit to volunteer service in the Salt Lake community, to prioritize equity and diversity in all of our outreach, to both implement new programming and to identify new funding sources to support international education for underrepresented students, and we commit to learning from our students and our colleagues by asking for feedback so that we can continually identify ways to improve our work.

To find out more, please reach out at ias@utah.edu.