

June 11, 2020

A Message from the Board in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

The Society of California Archivists affirms Black Lives Matter and stands in solidarity with the protesters calling for the end of police brutality and violence against the Black community.

We stand in opposition to the historic and present state of violence against Black lives. The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor are a direct result of the structural racism that infiltrates every corner of our society, including the archival profession.

The Society of California Archivists acknowledges that our profession has supported and continues to support racist systems and practices that uphold systemic inequality and perpetuate white supremacy. The legacy and role of white supremacy in archives has led to a predominately white and male historical record, while Black communities and Black voices are silenced, distorted, or entirely excluded from the historical record. Anti-Blackness has infiltrated our collections, policies, and workforce. It is our responsibility as archivists to dismantle oppressive archival practices and work toward building a more accurate and representative historical record. This moment reminds us as archivists that our work is not only to preserve but to amplify those voices that have been, and continue to be, unheard and silenced. It is this work that we must prioritize at the present moment. Otherwise, we can be sure that the history that is told will be by those voices most carefully crafted to establish and maintain systems of dominance and control.

The SCA Board is stepping forward to acknowledge and work toward amending the inequities caused by systemic racism. We call on ourselves and our white and non-Black membership to think about the antiracist actions we can take both professionally and personally to support the Black Lives Matter movement and to eradicate anti-Blackness in all forms. Personally you can take action by: donating to bail funds; signing petitions advocating for police accountability; locally supporting policies that defund police/law enforcement; donating to organizations that advocate for an end to structural racism; and calling your local/state representatives. Professionally we can: consider the policing nature of the archives and review access/use policies; rewrite collection development policies; commit to ethical collecting practices and prioritize care for protesters if collecting on the protests; revise our descriptions to eliminate racist/biased language, distortion, and the erasure of Black lives; and support community archives by providing resources.

The Board recognizes that in order to make headway in dismantling structural inequity, SCA as an organization needs to change. The SCA Board is committed to taking specific actions to show our support and to dismantle white supremacy, and we will remain accountable to our membership through further communications.

-In Solidarity, The SCA Board