**Statement on Black Lives Matter**

In line with many Africana Studies programs in the U.S., we felt compelled to make a statement about everything that is going on around us. Under the first African American U.S. president, the Black Lives Matter movement was born. This was a stark reminder and a wake-up call to many that individual achievement does not translate to collective prosperity. Globally, researchers find that people of African descent are experiencing the double viruses of both racial discrimination and the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, many around the world have risked their lives to have their voices heard in the wakes of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd.

Unfortunately, some still see BLM as at odds with law enforcement, ignoring the existence of Black police officers and multiracial allies against racism. This is being said on the day of the funeral of a family friend, a Black police officer killed on a domestic violence call, one of the most dangerous for police officers. (It is not lost on us that this month, October, is domestic violence awareness month.) Others see BLM as diminishing the lives of non-Black people. With October also being breast cancer awareness month, no one ever says “What about prostate cancer?” The either/or dichotomous worldview keeps us from understanding nuances in all social situations. A prime example of this is the Nigerian protest movement against SARS and for police accountability. There are multi-faceted layers to explaining these events.

At VSU, the African American Studies Program was designed to shine a light on ways to think about diverse human experiences and educate everyone to understand that our way of seeing the world must go beyond what we see in our daily lives. We are here to do just that. Finally, in the reflective words of India.Arie, “there’s hope”.