

## Statement Racism VU: Black Lives Matter

In recent weeks The Netherlands has been re-awakened by loud voices of anger and sorrow at the injustice called racism. They speak of violence that kills people. They also speak of hidden power structures in our society that put people at a disadvantage because of fewer opportunities to develop themselves or because of ethnic profiling. Sadness about broken lives and unsung talent, powerless rage about those who defend or neglect racism. The wave of protests calls for the often avoided debate and for concrete measures.

### Equal opportunities and equal rights

At VU Amsterdam, we hear and understand the protest, speak out, and take a look at ourselves in the mirror. Not for the first time because we have a tradition of strong and critical diversity policies. But also not for the last time, because we are aware that there is much more to be done. We acknowledge the anger and sadness in our world, city, and university. We are committed to the struggle for a just world, to the efforts to correct past and present injustices. We work for equal opportunities and equal rights.

It is not only about colour, but also about gender, sexuality, culture, religion, and functional limitations. Last month, the Diversity Office described in its [Belonging@VU](#) report students' experiences with discrimination and exclusion. At VU Amsterdam, we should not look away from these experiences and therefore we need to fight racism and discrimination in our own organisation, together with lecturers and students. We are building a world in which diversity is acknowledged and celebrated. A world in which origin, skin colour, and religion make no difference to the way you are seen and treated. But as long as difference leads to injustice, we must keep naming it.

### Vrije Universiteit listens

Voices of anger and sorrow, from our own community and beyond, present us with a mirror. They challenge us to also look at our own past, our own actions, our own structures, our own prejudices and taken-for-grantedness. They invite us to reflect on the unequal opportunities that each of us had because of the colour of our skin or the location of our cradle. We accept that challenge.

What do we do and what are we going to do?

- VU Amsterdam continues 'courageous conversations' about uncomfortable questions with sometimes painful answers. In 3D, our (virtual) centre for debate, dialogue, and diversity, we will soon be organising new courageous conversations in a 'safe and brave space' for students and employees (follow it at <https://3d.vu.nl>).
- VU Amsterdam is investigating its past. We build on projects about slavery, discrimination, racism, and apartheid. We will foster debate about how we as a young university are connected to our colonial history.
- VU Amsterdam analyses the hidden inequality in its structures. We look at how we can break through the inequality of academic career opportunities so that our workforce becomes a better reflection of our multicultural student population. We explore how we can build a community where everyone can belong. We empower students and (young) employees to proudly shape and share their multicoloured identities as role models for new generations.
- VU Amsterdam will look even more critically at its curricula and at role patterns and international relations and fight against the inequalities that often still remain.

### Come share with us

What are your experiences, ideas, solutions? We invite you to participate. Maybe you recognize the pain and anger and have suffered from racism and discrimination, or witness structural racism we need to tackle. Maybe you feel privileged and show solidarity. Maybe you feel uncomfortable with the protests but want to understand. As VU-community, we want to find ways to each other and to a future in which everyone is at home and can grow. We invite everyone to think along, speak out, and share ideas on how we, as VU Amsterdam, can take steps in the fight against racism and for a just society. We also hope to hear from you how we can have this conversation in ways that feel safe to you.

Do you want to be kept informed of these activities? Enter your email address via [this link](#).

Do you have ideas for activities and initiatives? Send an email to our Diversity Office, [divers@vu.nl](mailto:divers@vu.nl).

Do you have experiences with discrimination and racism? Then report this to one of our confidential advisers. Click here for the [advisors for students and employees](#).

Do you want to know more about the background to the fight against racism?

- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- [www.mappingslavery.nl](http://www.mappingslavery.nl)
- [www.theblackarchives.nl](http://www.theblackarchives.nl)
- [www.Nederlandwordtbeter.nl](http://www.Nederlandwordtbeter.nl)
- [www.withuiswerk.nl](http://www.withuiswerk.nl)

Together we are committed to a community that does not exclude but connects.

Mirjam van Praag, president Executive Board  
Vinod Subramaniam, rector magnificus and member Executive Board  
Marcel Nollen, member Executive Board  
Frank Abbas, dean Faculty of Dentistry / ACTA  
Hemme Battjes, dean Faculty of Law  
Ruard Ganzevoort, Chief Diversity Officer and dean Faculty of Religion and Theology  
Susan Legêne, dean Faculty of Humanities  
Karen van Oudenhoven - van der Zee, dean Faculty of Social Sciences  
Chris Polman, dean Faculty of Medicine  
Guus Schreiber, dean Faculty of Science  
Maurits van Tulder, dean Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences  
Arjen van Witteloostuin, dean School of Business and Economics