

LAMA Statement on Black Lives and Archives

We, the Board and Officers of the Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association, mourn the loss of the many Black lives that have been stolen by police brutality. We condemn racially motivated violence committed against Black Americans and other people of color. We stand in solidarity with all who seek equity and who strive to change the dynamic of systemic racial injustice that exists in our state and in our country.

The historic material that is held in Louisiana's archival repositories is often disturbing. Our collections contain a history of state-sponsored racial injustice and violent oppression, from slavery to Jim Crow to voter suppression and other flashpoints of inequality today. As archivists, we must acknowledge our privileged position in this conversation. Those of us at once-segregated institutions must acknowledge the institutional failure of collecting a truly representative history of our communities. Archivists will soon preserve the stories of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others, as well as the photographs, videos, and social media posts created during the demonstrations that are taking place across this nation. We believe that the preservation of the archival record of all communities ensures the protection of our civil liberties.

We have much work to do in order to be entrusted with preserving the history of Black lives and the lives of people of color in Louisiana. We acknowledge feelings of distrust deeply rooted in historic instances of oppression and exclusion within historical repositories and archival institutions, and we will avidly work to encourage our repositories to build relationships with underserved and underrepresented communities. As appraisers of the historical record, we are committed to engaging, supporting, sharing, and amplifying the stories of people and communities that have for too long been unheard. We respect these communities and all forms of historical documentation and preservation they engage to define themselves. We also charge ourselves with ensuring that our libraries and archives are spaces of safety and inclusion. We stand with our Black colleagues, students, volunteers, and patrons as they continue to endure systemic racial injustice, and we champion their voices and contributions to our institutions.

We believe that Black Lives Matter.

Signed,

The Board and Officers of the Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association