

## STATEMENT ON THE LEGACY OF RACISM IN THE COUNTRIES WE LOVE

In the wake of the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, we share the grief but also the rage of African Americans and people of all backgrounds, especially people of color, in the United States and beyond.

The resulting outcry is a wake-up call that will resonate for years to come.

George Floyd's murder, in broad daylight, could have gone unnoticed, especially since the initial police report was falsified. But there were witnesses, and their horrific video made us all witnesses.

As the fog begins to lift after months of quarantine and lockdown, we have also witnessed the disproportionate impact of COVID19 on people of color, including immigrants and Native Americans.

None of this is news, and yet it is: as never before, we have literally and metaphorically been brought to our knees before the undeniable truth that endemic racism continues to exact a cruel, daily, penetrating toll on the lives of millions.

We are also deeply aware of the systemic racism and discrimination towards indigenous people in Mexico, where for 18 years most of our programs have been held. Even as we move online, our roots in Mexico make that country not just our virtual but our real home.

Under the Volcano was launched with a commitment to diversity and to promoting the voices of writers across boundaries and borders of all kinds. As writers and journalists, our mission is to tell stories that matter and to create work that bears witness. We will continue to encourage writing across a whole spectrum of styles and concerns and to welcome writers from all backgrounds. But today we reaffirm that commitment with the understanding that good intentions are no longer enough.

What happens to a dream deferred? Langston Hughes asked. We all know the answer. If this week's riots are, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "the language of the unheard," we must begin by listening.

Moving forward, in consultation with our alumni, faculty and advisers from communities of color in the US and with our supporters and alumni in Mexico, we pledge to take specific steps to ensure that all our programs truly represent the constituencies of writers in the countries we love and beyond.

As a first step, thanks to an initial pledge, we have established a Black Writers Matter Fund to make clear that African American writers are crucial members of our programs.

We are well aware that there is still much to be done and will update this statement as we have more to report.

June 2020