

# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES  
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Tommie Shelby, Chair  
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June 1, 2020

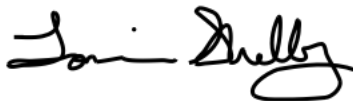
Dear AAAS Faculty, Staff, and Students,

I'm at a loss for the words that might offer comfort and encouragement in the midst of such an enormous and multi-dimensional crisis. As you know, we are a department that was forged through protracted struggle and in response to antiblack racism and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Many of us have devoted our lives to trying to understand the causes of racial and related injustices and to identifying the appropriate responses to such oppression. Even as research and teaching are our primary mission, winning black freedom and genuine racial equality are at the heart of our enterprise and vocation. So I don't have anything to tell you that you don't already know. Our struggle continues.

I do, however, want to let you know that I'm thinking of you and wishing desperately that we could all get together in person to provide mutual support. I trust that you are supporting one another as best you can (and, in light of our public health crisis, safely) and would encourage you to reach out to those who are most likely in distress or feeling isolated.

I'm in conversation with some other units on campus to organize some public (if virtual) conversations about racism, police violence, the political morality of resistance, and the state repression of dissent. I'll keep you informed as these plans take shape. For now, I offer solidarity and urge you not to succumb to despair.

As Ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tommie Shelby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "T" and "S".

Tommie Shelby