



## **Smith College School for Social Work – An Invitation for Dialogue**

The faculty and administrators of the Smith College School for Social Work are deeply disheartened by the decision of the New York City grand jury not to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo in relation to the death of Mr. Eric Garner, who died in July after being restrained in a chokehold by Officer Pantaleo. It is yet another example of the dismaying legalization of violence used by police toward people of color, particularly Black men and boys, within our society. Following on the heels of a grand jury's decision not to indict former police officer Darren Wilson in connection with the death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, this decision offers further confirmation of how deeply structural racism and inequality, which dehumanize communities of color, destroy lives, and degrade us all, are embedded in all corners of society, including our "justice" system.

In the months surrounding these two grand-jury verdicts, we have been grappling as an institution with several critical issues:

1. How should we, an institution for educating social workers, members of a profession with a set of professional ethics that call us to "act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination" (NASW Code of Ethics) against any persons and groups, respond to such events?
2. How should we, an institution for educating clinical social workers, members of a profession with a set of professional ethics that call us to not "practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race" (NASW Code of Ethics) and multiple other sociopolitical identities, take action in the light of such events occurring in the society in which we live and practice?
3. How can we, a school for clinical social work with an explicit antiracism commitment, respond to these events in ways that actualizes our commitment as concrete and effective set of actions rather than as theoretical aspirations?

These are complex questions that we, as a school, commit to examine with our faculty, students and other stakeholders.

We hope that you will join us in our ongoing efforts to find meaningful ways to uphold our values and ethical commitments to the profession, the School, and to ourselves as members of a value-driven profession that takes the goal of social justice seriously and personally. We hope to expand and welcome critical dialogue.

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*Founded in 1918, the Smith College School for Social Work is internationally recognized for its academic excellence and its specialization in graduate-level clinical social work, as well as for its commitment to anti-racism. The School offers M.S.W. and Ph.D. programs, as well as continuing education. It has been coeducational for more than 40 years. More information about the School can be found on its website at [www.smith.edu/ssw](http://www.smith.edu/ssw).*

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