



# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

**June 4, 2020**

**Dear Black Students at Florida State University,**

**We are writing to offer our public love and support for you and to let you know that we see you and feel the racial battle fatigue, grief and frustration that you are probably feeling. The last few weeks coupled with the historic antagonism and attack on Black people in the United States is troubling. The current and persistent anti-Black racism in the United States and in the rest of the world is exhausting, distressing, and debilitating. We recognize the toll institutional and structural racism can take on your motivation, as well as mental, physical, and spiritual health, especially with the heightened anxiety of living through a pandemic that has disproportionately affected Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. We know that you are balancing all of this while striving to thrive in your academic programs. We recognize that institutional racism is still very much an issue on our campus and we are committed to doing our part in addressing this wherever and whenever we can. We encourage each of you to give yourself grace. Take some time for yourself, the work will always be there.**

**On February 23, 2020, Ahmaud Arbery was chased down by two white men, videoed by a third, and shot and killed in South Georgia for jogging in his neighborhood. On March 13, 2020, Breonna Taylor was shot eight times in her own home by police who served a warrant at the wrong address while the suspect they sought was already in custody. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by a police officer who pinned him down to the ground with his knee on his neck for nearly 10 minutes while pleading "I can't breathe". On May 27, 2020, Tony McDade, a Black trans man, was killed by police here in Tallahassee, Florida. These lives that were violently snuffed out by the very institutions claiming to serve and protect remind us of too many others; Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Atatiana Jefferson, Aiyanna Stanley-Jones, Trayvon Martin, Nina Pop.**

**These are only a few of the names and stories of Black people who have been killed for being Black in the recent decade. There are countless others whose names have gone unmentioned in the media and even more who have died as a result of the coronavirus epidemic. These killings and the many other forms of anti-Black violence that go un- or underreported by the media have led to the recent protests and unrest occurring in nearly every state around the country. Just this past week the Tallahassee community took to the streets to protest local police actions and police violence across the country. During the course of these protests the people were met with violence in the form of someone driving**



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his vehicle into the crowd. Many such cases of extrajudicial violence and vigilantism have occurred.

President Thrasher did [release a statement on Twitter](#) on Friday, May 29, 2020. On the evening of Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> President Thrasher shared a [follow up email updating](#) the campus community on efforts to address student concerns. However, there are no official university statements of acceptance, apology, tolerance, diversity, and/or inclusion that any campus administrator can write that will make a meaningful dent in deconstructing the system of white supremacy that is threaded through the fabric of our country.

We, as Black faculty, want you to see and feel our support for you as Black students. As faculty we have a responsibility to hold the FSU administration accountable for addressing the campus racial climate. While we acknowledge that solving structural and systemic racism within academia will not happen overnight (as our foremother Audre Lorde states, “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house”), we want to clearly state our investment in continuing to deconstruct the present system and to begin to rebuild an academic space that is rooted in anti-racist ideology. In the interest of transparency, we offer the following recommendations to the university administration and offer them here for your review. We invite you and FSU alumni to engage in this conversation with us and with university leadership to address your needs as Black students and pursue a more just and inclusive campus community. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Acknowledge that all of higher education is complicit if we are not naming and calling out racism and its entangled nature with the injustices of sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism in our work.
2. Provide mentorship networks between Black Faculty, Black Staff, and Black Students across departments and disciplines.
3. Strongly recommend a First-Year Experience reading curriculum rooted in social and racial justice and First-Year Discussion Group Series. Those who lead these discussion series should be compensated for their labor.
4. Strongly recommend that All First Year Students (including transfer students) complete a module on the racial history of Tallahassee that focuses on segregation past and present in the city, unrest and race relations, and the historical relationship between FSU and the city, and with FAMU.



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- 5. Create reciprocal partnerships between the University and organizations in the community that are fighting racism, prejudice, injustice, and bigotry.**
- 6. Strongly recommend that all departments and programs complete the eight hour National Coalition Building Institute training.**
- 7. Strongly recommend that new faculty and staff hires, including Deans, upper administration, and FSU Board of Trustees members, attend NCBI training within their first six months of being onboarded to FSU.**
- 8. Strongly recommend that all departments and colleges craft a diversity and inclusion statement and plan that addresses a strategy for increased recruitment, retention, and mentoring for Black students, staff, and faculty that is supported and accounted for within the University Strategic Plan.**
- 9. Strongly recommend that the University create a paid Anti-Racism Task force composed of students, staff, faculty, administrators and individuals from the community that directly reports to the President and Provost. This task force will also build space and create structure for a Vice President for Anti-Racism as a part of the FSU Cabinet.**
- 10. Strongly recommend that FSU should hold at least two events per semester in conjunction with FAMU (one located on FAMU's campus and one on FSU's campus) entitled "Community Conversations" designed to help facilitate dialogue between the two Universities and to address the historical injustices brought on by Florida State University as an institution as well as early alumni and founders of the University.**

**As Angela Davis astutely notes, "It's not enough anymore to not be racist, we all must be anti-racist." We believe now can be a time not just for building and sustaining community, but to remember and live by the words of Federico Garcia Lorca: "I will always be on the side of those who have nothing and who are not even allowed to enjoy the nothing they have in peace." We believe that if we work together, we will win.**

**#BlackLivesMatter**

**In peace and solidarity with all of you,**

**Dr. Cameron Beatty  
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies**

**Dr. Shantel Gabriel Buggs  
Sociology & African American Studies**

**Dr. James E. Wright, II  
Askew School of Public Administration & Policy**

**Dr. Antonio C. Cuyler  
Art Education**



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**Dr. Tamara Bertrand Jones**  
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**Dr. Patricia Golay**  
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**Dr. Lakeisha Johnson**  
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**Dr. Ceasar Douglas**  
Department of Management

**Dr. April Jackson**  
Department of Urban & Regional Planning

**Dr. Tisha Holmes**  
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**Dr. Mackenzie Alston**  
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