



WRITING PROGRAMS
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June 15, 2020

UCLA Writing Programs
Letter of Support

The undersigned faculty and staff in Writing Programs at UCLA mourn the recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless other Black people killed as a result of police brutality and white supremacy. We stand in solidarity with those protesting this violence and affirm that Black Lives Matter.

The United States is facing a moment of reckoning; the sheer magnitude of this movement emphasizes the need for justice now. We in Writing Programs acknowledge the urgency of this demand; we also acknowledge the urgency of a meaningful and effective response. We know that written statements and public protests, while essential in bringing awareness to systemic injustices, are themselves not enough to bring about the systemic change we so desperately need. We must follow our intentions and demonstrations with sustained and ongoing anti-racist action.

Because Writing Programs serves both UCLA undergraduate and graduate students of all disciplines, our curriculum is inherently interdisciplinary, granting our faculty the opportunity to teach critical reading, thinking, and writing skills that students can further develop within their own fields of interest. It is important, therefore, that we teach our students that reading and writing are social acts shaped by systems of power, privilege, and ideology regardless of academic discipline, and that these systems must be evaluated and critiqued. We understand that systemic racism determines whose voices get heard and whose are silenced. Therefore, not only must we include BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) writers, artists, and activists in our curricula at every opportunity, we must also examine the very power structures that have sought to exclude, undermine, and/or silence these perspectives in the first place. This work cannot be left to our BIPOC faculty and students; all of our faculty members need to share in the labor of this anti-racist work, both by educating ourselves more deeply and teaching racial literacy to those who require a more robust education.

As lifelong learners and educators, we in Writing Programs aim to continually reflect on ways to diversify our curriculum, faculty make-up, and pedagogical practices in meaningful ways. As writers, we also recognize the importance of the revision process in our writing practice, and therefore, acknowledge that we have many more drafts ahead of us as we do our part in dismantling systemic racism. Though we know that changing our

practices will be challenging, we are committed to beginning this process in the following ways:

1. This historical moment is asking all of us to examine our own beliefs, values, and perspectives. The first step in doing this effectively is confronting the gaps in our own knowledge about the histories and experiences of Black people most immediately, and BIPOC broadly. To this end, we have invited our faculty and graduate students to participate in an anti-racist reading group which will center Black thinkers, writers, and scholars whose work will not only provide the necessary vocabulary to have important discussions about stopping racism in our communities and classrooms but also guide us toward pedagogical strategies to implement what we have learned. We recognize that our anti-racist work will lead to uncomfortable conversations, but we welcome that discomfort as it can provide a productive and generative impetus in our journeys to bringing about important, systemic change. This reading group will begin in the Summer of 2020.

2. As an outgrowth of our effort to deepen our understanding of anti-racism work, we plan to implement colloquia and pedagogy workshops monthly throughout the academic school year. These sessions will be organized and facilitated by experts in critical diversity studies and anti-racist activism, and will address real-time issues surrounding racial justice and pedagogical practices that will equip faculty to navigate these topics effectively. These sessions will begin in the Fall of 2020.

3. We also acknowledge that UCLA has a history of failing to hire, support, and retain BIPOC faculty, particularly Black faculty. It is a problem outlined with the support of staggering numbers on UCLA's very own Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion [website](#). We commit not only to attracting, hiring, supporting, and retaining BIPOC faculty in Writing Programs, but also to becoming better advocates for them. We likewise commit to updating our current hiring practices so that our program becomes an inviting place where our BIPOC colleagues can thrive. In an effort to accomplish this goal, we will begin by submitting a formal proposal to the Writing Programs' Executive Committee that members of our hiring committee each year are drawn from active participants of the anti-racist reading group. We will submit our proposal in the Fall of 2020.

4. Writing Programs will also create a robust electronic repository of resources and information to support Writing Programs' faculty in their ongoing education and implementation of anti-racist curriculum and pedagogical practices. We will begin to collate these resources, which will be available for Writing Programs faculty access, in the Summer of 2020.

5. Writing Programs will utilize this information and deeper engagement with anti-racist theory and practice in our effort to cultivate helpful resources for our students and the broader community, which we will then make accessible on our departmental website. Our goal will be to make this repository for students available by Winter 2021.

We know that this process will not be easy and that we may not always get it right. We also know that these commitments are only the first steps toward positive change. Our continued education and developing pedagogy will engender increased awareness and new opportunities for growth in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. But we are committed to holding ourselves and each other accountable to this growth.

In Solidarity,

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