

Dear Black Students, Staff and Faculty,

With raw and exposed emotions, we come to you as the Black Strategies Group (BSG), the Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center (BCC) and the Black Academic Excellence (BAE) Team to acknowledge and address the overwhelming bigotry, hatred and racism that we continually face in our society. This statement has been delayed, but not due to lack of concern or apathy. We haven't the right words for our collective pain and anger at the recent publicly recognized murders of Black people in the United States, but feel the need to make a statement, nonetheless. We apologize for our silence and hope for your understanding.

First and foremost, **BLACK.LIVES.MATTER**. Systemic racism continues to disproportionately impact us not only in policing, but also in healthcare, education, economic inequities, and much more. Yet, we are expected to perform at our best while silently and individually suppressing the trauma of continual violence and oppression against our community.

The recent statement issued by UO leadership deprioritized Black lives and, in doing so, diminishes our pain and trauma. At such a critical moment, the lack of consultation and care with the message not only fails to comfort many of us, but also confronts us with the reality that we remain marginalized and placated. This is a microcosm of a larger systemic issue that we need to address, and we can't do it on our own. Black faculty, staff and students continue to bear a disproportionate amount of the university's work related to "diversity and inclusion" due to the existing climate of the institution. This experience has been a consistent part of our lives in Eugene and at the UO, which is why we find it so difficult to stay.

These incidents have clearly exacerbated the issues and problems we see daily. While we must support students and each other, we are stretch thin with limited faculty and staff as resources. Four years ago, we presented our concerns and as we enter a new election cycle, we anticipate heightened attacks on Black lives especially after the President of the United States' incendiary social media posts regarding the protests and violence in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Without hiring and supporting Black faculty and staff, our existing community will continue to suffer – especially our students.

As James Baldwin noted, "The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated." Black students, faculty and staff, while we may be physically distant, it is time for us to unite.

To UO Black Students, we encourage you to speak your powerful truth while remaining safe. When you can, employ your talents as an outlet for your frustration and find ways to hold your governments accountable to take a stand against the systems and people that allow these atrocities to continue every day around the country.

Black faculty and staff, you are also not alone. It is okay to feel exhausted, angry, ignored and hurt. Let's lean on each other in advocacy and care for each other. We are committed to stand united as we support one another, our students, and the Black community.

We encourage you to reach out to your peers and others at UO who you trust and let us know how we can support you in any way that we can. We are here to provide a venue for Black students, faculty, and staff to come together to talk about recent events.

We are our ancestors' wildest dreams. We are not a monolith and know that this statement does not capture all our experiences or views, nor is it the end of our work. This is a conversation and change movement that has existed long before us and will continue in the wake of this present moment. Let's use our collective voice to create change and positively impact UO's current and future Black students, faculty and staff.

In solidarity,

Black Strategies Group

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center

Black Academic Excellence Team