

June 8, 2020

Dear ESPM Faculty and CNR Administration,

*One could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist  
while negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved.*

– W.E.B. Du Bois

As we continue to grieve the lives lost to police brutality and racism (Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and more), we are asking for more from our academic leadership to address ways in which systemic anti-Black racism has permeated academia. **In support of our Black colleagues**, we are reaching out today as the **Environmental Science, Policy, and Management Graduate Diversity Council (ESPM GDC)** and a collective of the ESPM community to ask that ESPM faculty and staff take action. While we appreciate the [statements made by Dr. D’Odorico with the ESPM Council](#) and Dr. Ackerly, we believe that **words are not enough**. You have declared that it is time for ESPM to move from non-racism to anti-racism, and **we are declaring our need and want for actions** to carry out this stated commitment. As it stands, our work environment in ESPM is complacent with racism.

In solidarity with and inspired by numerous graduate student bodies across campus who have already requested actions from their respective departments to follow statements of anti-racist ideals (e.g. [Integrative Biology](#), [Plant Microbial Biology](#), [Chemistry](#), and others), we are writing to you today to lay out our expectations on how the ESPM community must proceed so that we can work together to end ESPM’s historical complacency with systematic racism.

ESPM is a leader in the global environmental community composed of scholars engaged in both environmental science and environmental justice research. As such we are uniquely positioned to engage in many societal issues. However, the department as a whole has done very little to undo systemic anti-Black racism and to foster an inclusive work environment for students. **Now is the time for anti-racist actions.**

In order to embrace anti-racist values and move ESPM toward a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for Black students, **at this time we are asking for the following actionable steps to improve the social climate in ESPM for Black students** (each demand is linked to the Addendum for supporting recommendations and considerations for all demands):

**[Improve teaching, mentorship, and research ethics to foster inclusivity for Black students in ESPM](#)**

1. Require annual mandatory professionally paid anti-racist and bystander intervention trainings for faculty and staff beginning in academic year 2020-2021.
2. Restructure ESPM 201A to include professionally paid anti-racist training beginning with the incoming 2020 cohort.
3. Revise all course syllabi to include 50% or more Black scholars and scholars of color by Fall 2020.

4. Establish a protocol for investigating faculty who lose multiple graduate students, or whose students disengage due to alienation from the department, beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.
5. As faculty members, reflect on your personal student mentorship practice, and research ethics and evaluation.

**Enhance recruitment and retention efforts for Black students, staff, faculty, and speakers to increase diversity and equity in ESPM**

6. Encourage the restructuring of the Sponsored Projects for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) programs to support Black students and students of color.
7. Commit to hiring two Black tenure-track faculty in the next five years to address the lack of Black faculty in the department.
8. Hire staff to support the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion for the 2020-2021 academic year.
9. Add graduate student representation to tenure decisions, especially to evaluate contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.
10. Provide adequate funding support that is cognizant of complex financial situations of Black students and students of color.
11. Ensure that 50% or more of speakers across various ESPM-sponsored seminar series are Black or Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.

**Communicate our shared values and commitments to anti-racism in support of current and future Black students in ESPM**

12. Publicize a list of concrete actions you will take to meet our demands on the ESPM website by June 30, 2020.
13. Sign onto [the letter](#) by the Law Students of African Descent (LSAD) to reject campus policing and cut ties with the Berkeley Police Department, AND publish a public statement as a department to Chancellor Christ to meet the demands as outlined by LSAD by June 30, 2020.

In addition, to move towards anti-racism you must focus on self-reflexivity and self-examination. As such, we would request that you, personally, engage with [these resources on anti-racism](#).

To this end, **our demands are only a beginning**. Not only do we hope to support Black voices, but all communities in ESPM because **discrimination affects many** on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, documentation status, (dis)ability, and much more. To conclude, we recognize that many of these interventions will take time and resources. The steps we have laid out reflect the need for continual effort—backed with support, energy, and funding in perpetua—to respond to racism within our community. We look forward to future conversations on this but **we ask for your immediate response to enact anti-racism in the department and beyond starting with our demands to communicate our shared values and a list of actions ESPM will take on the ESPM website by the end of this month**. Additionally, we hope that next steps include follow-up meetings planned between the ESPM GDC and faculty to further these actions.

Lastly, we appreciate that the department strives to listen to students and address students' concerns; ESPM is often ahead of other departments when working towards improving the lives of students. To those few faculty and staff that have positively interacted with, consoled, or checked in on our Black colleagues: thank you. You are seen. Finally, thanks all for the steps you will take to meet our demands.

In Solidarity,

*The ESPM Graduate Diversity Council and the Undersigned Collective of ESPM Community Members*

|                           |                    |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Kendall Calhoun           | Amelia Harvey      | Carmen Tubbesing   |
| Aidee Guzman              | Joshua Earl Arnold | Akos Kokai         |
| Whitney Mgbara            | Benji Kessler      | Allison Byrne      |
| Katherine Siegel          | Mitchell Serota    | Julie Gorecki      |
| Alexandra Kahn            | Brian Klein        | Maggie Grundler    |
| Amy Van Scoyoc            | Robin D. López     | Katherine Wolf     |
| Katherine Wolf            | Rebecca Brunner    | Robert Shortt      |
| Dylan Beal                | Evan Patrick       | Julia Murphy       |
| Kenzo Esquivel            | Hannah Waterhouse  | Laura Dev          |
| Ben Goldstein             | Wenjing Xu         | Juliet Lu          |
| Rosalie Z. Fanshel        | Jessie Moravek     | Allegra Mayer      |
| Lucy Andrews              | Chippie Kislik     | Maywa Montenegro   |
| Yvonne Socolar            | Rachel Weinberg    | Ashley Adams       |
| Christine Wilkinson       | Crossley Pinkstaff | Julia Toro         |
| Phoebe Parker-Shames      | Sasha Nikolaeva    | Melina Packer      |
| Leke Hutchins             | Erin Westeen       | Emily Chen         |
| Zhongqi Miao              | Hana Moidu         | Natalie Graham     |
| Brian Kastl               | Jessica Heiges     | Jacob West-Roberts |
| Daniel Foster             | Sean Peterson      | Hannah Welsh       |
| Eric Dougherty            | Kari Norman        | Drew Hart          |
| Annie Taylor              | Anna Holmquist     | Megan Pagliaro     |
| Jacob Bukoski             | Ataya Cesspooch    | Rachael Ryan       |
| T. Eren Bilir             | Andrew Rothstein   | Rachel Neurath     |
| Tara Seely                | Alejo García       | Clare Pace         |
| Melissa Chapman           | Brian Whyte        | Sarick Matzen      |
| Claudia Herbert           | Christina Fossum   | Matthew Libassi    |
| Avery Shawler             | Alexii Sigona      | Paige Stanley      |
| Danielle Perryman         | Juliet Lu          | Alex Thomas        |
| Chelsea Andreozzi         | Clarke Knight      | Allan Cabrero      |
| Jimena Diaz               | Pranjal Dwivedi    | Ashton Wesner      |
| Margiana Petersen-Rockney | Ignacio Escalante  |                    |
| Elliot Chang              | Janelle Dorcy      |                    |

**Let us not forget, as Fannie Lou Hamer stated:**

*Nobody's free until everybody's free.*

– Fannie Lou Hamer

## ADDENDUM

*In this addendum we elaborate on the reasoning and specific steps that can be taken for each of our demands.*

### **Improve teaching, mentorship, and research ethics to foster inclusivity in ESPM**

#### **1. Require annual mandatory professionally paid anti-racist and bystander intervention training for faculty and staff beginning in academic year 2020-2021.**

Faculty bias, including implicit racial bias, is one of the central predictors of student success in the classroom (Martin et al. 2017, Jacoby-Senghor et al. 2016). ESPM must mandate appropriate training for all faculty, as all faculty interact with Black, Indigenous, and other students of color at Berkeley. While our letter above stresses advocacy and allyship with Black students, we also write about Indigenous and non-black students of color in the hopes that all students of color will inevitably benefit from this action. Thus we ask specifically that the department institute *mandatory* annual anti-racism and bystander intervention training for *all* faculty and staff, that ESPM institute a department-wide system of blind grading, and that ESPM institute a system of reporting and accountability for faculty, particularly tenured faculty, for racist incidents they perpetuate in the classroom.

#### **2. Restructure 201A to include professionally paid anti-racist training beginning with incoming 2020 cohort.**

ESPM must incorporate anti-racist training for all students into ESPM 201A. We ask that the anti-racist training be led by well-paid consultants with specific training and expertise in facilitating such work, and *not* by unpaid graduate students of color. We also ask that ESPM teach students at their entry about various ways of knowing besides positivist epistemologies derived from White settler colonial histories. Further, 201A should specifically teach anti-racist research ethics, including, for example, accountability to Indigenous communities.

#### **3. Revise all course syllabi to include 50% or more Black scholars and scholars of color by Fall 2020.**

We ask that ESPM faculty evaluate their syllabi to ensure that they incorporate environmental justice topics, and that Black, Indigenous, and other scholars of color comprise 50% or more of the authors of the assigned readings. We recognize that some faculty have already done so, and thus, we ask other faculty to lean on them for support or inspiration. We further ask ESPM faculty to include authors and seminar speakers on their syllabi who are producing knowledge using methodologies that do not derive from White settler colonial epistemologies. Some of this scholarly work is found outside of the traditional academic literature as a result of the White gatekeeping that often happens in academic journals. Examples might include Black feminist epistemology (Collins 2002), Indigenous (e.g., Nishnaabeg) understandings of land as pedagogy (Simpson 2017), decolonial research methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith 2013), and others.

#### **4. Establish a protocol for investigating faculty who lose multiple graduate students, or whose students disengage due to alienation from the department, beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.**

The power structure of academia, especially the tenure system, creates a lack of accountability for faculty in positions of power when they engage in racist, abusive, or exclusionary actions. ESPM must begin holding professors and administrators accountable, for example, by communicating clearer protocols on the department website for reporting complaints and keeping and organizing records of the following: number and type of complaints, number of students who transfer labs and reasons why, and the number of students who drop out or “master out”.

Faculty who have a poor track record with regard to mentorship must be held responsible for actively improving their work as mentors. To this end, we ask for a system to be set in place that tracks when 1) students “master out”,

switch labs, or are not engaging with the broader ESPM community, as well as 2) when faculty leave students' qualifying exam or review committees. Similarly, there should be a tracking system in which graduate students can record or evaluate their qualifying committee members' mentorship and advising. With such records, the department should take active measures to work with faculty to create individualized plans for how they will improve their advising and continue to track their progress, which should be reviewed by ESPM's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officer and committee.

## **5. As faculty members, reflect on your personal student mentorship practice, and research ethics and evaluation.**

### ***Undergraduate and Graduate Mentorship***

Some questions, thoughts, and actions on which we ask you reflect:

- Look at your calendar. It probably has a lot of meetings with students. Who are the students? Did you talk about life outside of academics? Which of them felt comfortable telling you about their aunt in the hospital, their partner at home? Is care a central part of your work? This is connected to who has access to networks of support.
- Look at the times when you have or have not gone above and beyond (e.g. staying up late helping with someone's R code, reviewing a resume, or getting a coffee after class). How many of those times were with Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC)? How many times did you connect a BIPOC with the skills, people, and opportunities they needed? This is related to who is retained.

### ***Research Ethics and Evaluation***

We call on ESPM, especially White people in the department, to use this moment as an opportunity to reflect on privilege and the roles each of us play in the institutionalized hierarchy. The burden for addressing systemic racism should not fall on Black students or other under-represented groups. Leadership in the department (including division chairs, committee leaders, and administrators) must make it clear that there is an expectation for everyone in the department to take part in this work, not just students of color. Consider the following:

- Look at your most recent publications and ask yourself: How many of the cited authors are people of color? Women of color? This is connected to who is called an authority in our discipline.
- Look at the collaborators in your most recent grant and ask yourself: How many of them are BIPOC? How many of them are doing anti-racist work? Is that work explicitly on the grant? This is connected to who gets paid for what labor.
- Additionally, ask yourself: Who is given authorship, and what is the order of authors? Who gets invited to collaborate on projects and get authorship? This is connected to who gets hired and tenured.

## **Enhance recruitment and retention efforts for Black students, staff, faculty, and speakers to increase diversity and equity in ESPM**

### **6. Encourage the restructuring of the Sponsored Projects for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) programs to support Black students and students of color.**

We see a lack of diversity in ESPM undergraduate lab communities. We believe that the current structure of the SPUR program preferentially selects for students who have the socioeconomic and academic privilege to take on additional labor and research hours. We demand that ESPM support our pushing CNR to provide greater transparency and publish the demographic data of the potential and accepted applicant pools for SPUR students. The SPUR program should be restructured such that students can participate through work study or paid positions. Rather than providing \$500 to the faculty advisor, students in the SPUR program should receive direct living

wages. The application process should be amended to remove the strict GPA requirement and the personal statement should be restructured to focus on personal experiences, economic need, and actions related to issues of equity, inclusion, and justice. We ask that ESPM professors and leadership pledge to work with undergraduate and graduate student representatives to lobby CNR for the implementation of reforms to this program.

**7. Commit to hiring two Black tenure-track faculty in the next five years to address the lack of Black faculty in the department.**

The fact that our department has ZERO Black tenured faculty is unacceptable. As a globally renowned institution for environmental studies, what kind of message does this send to the rest of the world? What message does this send to our Black undergraduate and graduate students? Black students already have to contend with a prevailing notion of not belonging in nature — exemplified by birder Chris Cooper’s experience in Central Park this past month (in May 2020). The department must work to dispel the myth that Black faces don’t belong in green spaces (Finney 2014) or academia. We ask that a considerable effort be taken to hire two Black tenure-track faculty members within the next five years. Recruitment and retention of Black faculty **now** is essential to improving the recruitment and retention of Black graduate and undergraduate students as well as future Black faculty.

**8. Hire staff to support the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion for the 2020-2021 academic year.**

We commend the College of Natural Resources for creating the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion position. For this role to succeed, it will need the ongoing support of professional staff at the departmental level to perform the essential day-to-day work of program development and implementation. To ensure DEI initiatives include students in a meaningful manner, ESPM should fund a yearly DEI graduate student researcher position to work closely with professional staff and the Associate Dean. The position should include full tuition and fees. We also ask that two paid undergraduate positions be allocated to students from ESPM majors to further ensure DEI efforts include student voices. Rausser endowment funds could be allocated to these staff and student positions.

**9. Add graduate student representation to tenure decisions, especially to evaluate contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.**

As we demand increased Black representation amongst our faculty, we also ask that graduate students be incorporated in future faculty tenure decisions. Graduate students already play an important role in faculty recruitment, and their input for tenure decisions should also be considered invaluable. Adding graduate students’ perspectives would make the overall process more equitable and provide an opportunity to raise concerns around faculty with known issues, especially in evaluating faculty’s commitment to DEI. Graduate students should be selected via a vote by the GDC to serve on tenure decision committees.

**10. Provide adequate funding support that is cognizant of complex financial situations for Black students and students of color.**

Students of color and students from lower-income backgrounds are likely to feel the financial strains of pursuing a graduate education more acutely, as they often have higher levels of college indebtedness and less financial support from parents and family (Huelsman 2015). While the department has made strides in ensuring that students have a higher base-level income, we ask that ESPM GDC be included in future conversations regarding student funding. We further ask for continued commitment from the department to provide funding specifically for under-represented students. Additionally, students of color disproportionately do labor related to DEI initiatives, programming, and events. ESPM should work to compensate students for this important DEI work to improve the department via stipends or other financial support.

**11. Ensure that 50% or more of speakers across various ESPM sponsored seminar series are Black or Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) beginning in the academic year 2020-2021.**

There are more than enough Black scholars and scholars of color representing the fields that intersect the interests of the department to have adequate representation in the year-long seminar series. Therefore, we ask that the department ensure that 50% or more of the speakers invited to the seminar series be Black and/or Indigenous scholars and scholars of color.

**Communicate our shared values and commitments to anti-racism in support of current and future Black students in ESPM**

**12. Publicize a list of concrete actions you will take to meet our demands on the ESPM website by June 30, 2020.**

In order to demonstrate accountability to our demands, we request that you publish a list of the concrete actions the department plans to undertake now and in the near future.

**13. Sign onto [the letter](#) by the Law Students of African Descent (LSAD) to reject campus policing and cut ties with the Berkeley Police Department, AND publish a public statement as a department to Chancellor Christ to meet the demands as outlined by LSAD by June 30, 2020.**

The presence of campus police makes ESPM a more threatening place for Black students and other students of color. We cannot partner with departments or organizations on campus that are violent toward or consistently question the presence of Black members of our community. Emergency and campus services do not need to be armed. ESPM must recognize its position as a department within a wider campus community and lend support to initiatives that are of urgent importance to students at Berkeley and across the UC system.

## **References**

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## **Additional resources on DEI and disparities in funding and publication**

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