

To all in our Community,

This is a difficult and heartbreaking time. Our classes, research, degree progress, and daily work lives were interrupted in March, and many of us continue to endure the personal and family consequences of COVID-19 today. As May ended, the U.S. entered a heightened state of national crisis, with the tragic deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd only the latest in an unacceptable centuries-long litany of racial terror and lethal state-sanctioned violence that shape the lives of Black people in this country.

These emergencies and tragedies come on the heels of a COVID-19 crisis that is having a disproportionate impact on Black and Native communities, a surge in anti-Asian hostility related to the virus, and a years-long increase in hate crimes based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual identity. The intersection of all of this is almost too much to bear, and the weight of this burden is disproportionately felt by members of our community who are people of color. We echo the conclusion offered recently by the American Psychological Association that, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are also in the midst of a racism pandemic. Both pandemics require our immediate, strong, coordinated, and sustained intervention.

Let us be clear in stating that which we might have wished could go unstated. *Everyone* should feel safe jogging. Driving their car. Birdwatching. Shopping. Wearing a mask in public. Playing in their own yard. Going to work. Going to a campus party with friends. Asleep in their bed at home. Out for a walk. Protesting. Having a conversation with police. But we do not live in a society where this is the reality.

We recognize that each of us has a role to play in dismantling systems of oppression that have caused and perpetuated these inequities. We recognize that Tufts and this department are predominantly white institutions, and that those members of our community with privileged identities bear a particular responsibility for the pursuit of equity and justice, the promotion of diversity, and the facilitation of an inclusive climate.

As scientists and scholars, we are used to asking questions, many of which have resonance for the current crises. Questions such as: What are the emotional, cognitive, and neural effects of acute and sustained social stress? What are the developmental, social, physiological, and clinical implications of racism? But we must also recognize that there are pressing and challenging questions to ask about our own department:

- How has our department committed to being a safe and supportive environment for all groups? In what ways does the department fall short?
- How might bias be operating within our department? How can the department create an environment in which underrepresented minorities feel comfortable voicing concerns about bias? How can the department remediate bias?
- How can our department create a more equitable climate in terms of opportunities and resources for all of its members?
- How can our department establish and perpetuate a commitment to anti-racism, with impacts at the level of the university and general society?
- What concrete steps can we take to increase the representation of underrepresented racial minorities and other marginalized groups across our department's student, faculty, and staff populations?

While this is a time for reflection, mourning, and listening, emergencies also call for action. Effective immediately, the Department is creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. This committee will promote a publicly stated departmental principle: that the creation and maintenance of a diverse and inclusive environment is essential to rigorous thought, informed analysis, and scholarly excellence. It will be charged with asking the questions articulated above and recommending answers, thereby facilitating the department's development of *proactive* means of pursuing equity for all members of the undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, faculty, and staff constituencies of our shared community.

Committees alone do not solve departmental, much less societal, ills. We each bear *individual* responsibility to affirm and reaffirm our commitment to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community in which we can all feel safe and be productive. Once again, those among us with power, status, and privilege bear a particular responsibility to use that power, status, and privilege to advance equity in this department and more widely. While it is easy to feel helpless in the face of crisis, below we list some resources with links for self-education on anti-racism and anti-bias issues, for movements to promote Black survival and wellness, and for organizations that promote justice and support accountability.

- The Department of Psychology, Tufts University, June 7th, 2020

*This statement is offered by the entire department and was approved in an overwhelmingly positive (anonymous) vote of faculty, graduate students, and staff on June 7-8, 2020. It was written primarily by Sam Sommers and Chelsea Crittle, with additional input from multiple members of the department.*

### **Resources:**

<https://justiceforbreonna.org/>

<https://www.runwithmaud.com/>

[bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES](http://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES)

<https://blacklivesmatters.carrd.co/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/29/books/review/antiracist-reading-list-ibram-x-kendi.html>

<https://www.med.unc.edu/cher/centering-equity-in-this-moment/#commitment2>

<https://www.academics4blacklives.com/>

<https://www.massbailfund.org/>

<https://www.patreon.com/overcomingracism/>

<http://useofforceproject.org/#project>