



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO ANTI-BLACK RACISM AND RACIALIZED VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK FOLX

The Minority Student Caucus continues to stand with those who are fighting for the sanctity of Black lives and rebelling against White supremacy. Months after George Floyd's murder and as we begin a new academic year, we continue to say their names and mourn lives lost to state-sanctioned violence and institutionalized racism, both tools of White supremacy used to oppress Black lives. George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, David McAtee, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Philando Castile, Mya Hall, Korryn Gaines, Freddy Gray, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Emmett Till, George Stinney, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Rekia Boyd, and [many more](#). Today, we say what we have known all our lives but our country fails to recognize: ALL BLACK LIVES MATTER.

As others catch up to reality, Black folx remain excruciatingly aware that this country was built to serve only a privileged few. We take some solace in the fact that individuals, communities, and institutions worldwide are now reckoning with systemic racism and having conversations about structural change. However, we know that these conversations are not nearly enough and that anti-racism is not an end goal but is daily practice. We also recognize the ways that White supremacy works together with patriarchal systems to disproportionately harm Black women, trans, and queer lives. With enduring protests in all 50 states and dozens of countries, we are in the midst of a sweeping civil rights movement. It has become abundantly clear that this movement is not just about police brutality or mere survival. It is about Black folx's right to thrive in a country that they built, a country that has only offered that courtesy to White folx since its inception.

The Minority Student Caucus is unequivocally committed to Black students', faculty members', and staff members' right to thrive. We are dedicated to making space for Black folx to live and work without the fear of microaggressions and outright racism within our halls. We are dedicated to the professional and personal development of Black students and facilitating equitable opportunities for advancement. We are dedicated to centering Black communities in our public health practice. We are dedicated to dismantling oppressive systems, within and outside of academia, that have allowed White supremacy to breathe and Black bodies to perish.

As the news channels have turned their attention to other issues and the number of social media posts related to the movement diminish, we want to emphasize that the time for action is now and always. To protect Black health and lives, we must pursue immediate, radical, and anti-racist change in criminal justice and carceral systems, education, housing, employment, and public health. **As such, we ask White, non-Black POC, and Gillings as a whole to consider the following questions, and we look forward to your responses in the form of concrete actions undertaken at the individual and institutional levels.**

White students, faculty, and staff: Acknowledge that, because you benefit from White supremacy, you have a responsibility to dismantle it. If you disagree with this, as a public health student or educator, you have the responsibility to spend time educating yourself on racism and White supremacy. Otherwise, your ignorance of these very powerful sociopolitical determinants of health will permeate your work and endanger lives and communities. Ask yourselves: How are you being intentional in learning about racism and White supremacy? How have you yourself been complicit? In what ways do you benefit from White supremacy? What are you willing to sacrifice to dismantle it? How are you applying an anti-racist lens to your public health work and teaching?

Non-Black students, faculty, and staff: Non-Black communities of color also reap the benefits of White supremacy and must reckon with their own history of racism, colorism, and casteism. How are you holding yourself accountable? How are you encouraging your peers, families, and friends to meaningfully engage with anti-racism? How are you moving beyond optical allyship and building solidarity with Black folx? [Remember that you are not exempt from conversations about anti-Blackness in your own communities.](#)

Gillings-wide and departmental leadership: We are always asked to have patience with the pace of change, but the time for change is NOW. It is not hyperbole to say that inaction from public health institutions, including Gillings, is killing us. We need explicit commitments followed by tangible actions across ALL departments to implement and uphold anti-racist practices, attitudes, and teaching. Each department needs to work to dismantle systems of oppression to address deeply rooted inequities across the school and the world. Also, the burden of dismantling systems of oppression and addressing racial inequity cannot fall on Black faculty and staff. **We ask that the Dean's Council collectively consider and respond to the following questions with a concrete and time-dependent action plan.**

- How will you make space for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students, faculty, and staff to cope with the increased racial trauma they have experienced over the last few months?
- What does an anti-racist research portfolio at Gillings look like? How will Gillings and its affiliates use their expertise and financial and social capital to prioritize research proposals with explicitly anti-racist frameworks? How will you integrate anti-racism across all research proposals at Gillings? How will Gillings address the disproportionately high share of research funding that goes towards White researchers compared to BIPOC researchers?
- How are you centering the most marginalized groups, particularly Black and Brown folx, in your COVID-19-related research and practice? Who is leading this effort and who is benefitting from it? How will you continue to center the margins during all stages of the research process and as a vaccine and antiviral drugs are made available?
- Given that the pandemic is disproportionately impacting marginalized communities, how will you, as public health experts, advocate for school policies and virtual options that will keep students and Chapel Hill community members of marginalized identities safe from

infection and any related health consequences? How will Gillings ensure that student and community health are prioritized over profits in the decision-making process at both the school and university level?

- What is the plan to implement the Equity Collective report recommendations schoolwide? What is the timeline for implementation and evaluation?
- When will you mandate anti-racist trainings for all new and current employees? What kind of accountability system will Gillings leadership use to ensure employees are trained? How will proof of anti-racist work be incorporated into employees' performance reviews and decisions around promotions?
- How will you effectively advocate for the rights of international, undocumented, and DACAmented students—who often work endlessly with little to no financial and social support—to live, study, and work in this country without fear of deportation or reprisal?
- How will you teach us to harness our research, practice, and advocacy skills to influence political will and achieve true racial equity, not merely work towards reducing health disparities? How will you develop us as students into anti-racist public health practitioners?
- Students need better preparation before they start their practicums and potentially cause harm to marginalized communities. How will the practicum program evaluate students' readiness to work within specific communities?
- We denounce admissions and funding support that are contingent on prior criminal convictions. How will Gillings advocate to remove criminal history questions from the admissions application for graduate programs?

Black students, faculty, and staff: The Minority Student Caucus stands with you. As we challenge racism in our society and more conversations about race occur, we are experiencing more racialized violence. We urge you to prioritize and take care of your mental and physical health. We hope you have the time and space to find joy, celebrate each of your daily triumphs, and thrive. We are always here to support you, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We wish there were more resources at UNC for you, but here are some you may find helpful.

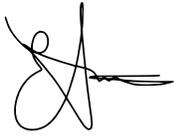
- [UNC Initiative for Minority Excellence](#)
- [UNC Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- [UNC LGBTQ Center](#)
- [Carolina Black Caucus](#)
- [The Loveland Foundation Therapy Fund](#)
- [Open Path Psychotherapy Collective](#)
- [Gillings Virtual Student Engagement webpage](#)
- Support pods for Black and international students organized by the Gillings Office of Student Affairs
- UNC Human Resources

In solidarity,

The incoming and outgoing Minority Student Caucus Co-Presidents



Snigdha Peddireddy, MSC Co-President, 2020-21



Eliana Armora Langoni, MSC Co-President, 2020-21



Deanie Anyangwe, MSC Co-President, 2019-20



Hailey Mason, MSC Co-President, 2019-20

This statement is undersigned by the 2020-2021 Minority Student Caucus Executive Board members:

Zamantha Granados, Treasurer, Health Behavior, MPH

Aditi Kamat, Secretary, Global Health, MPH

Juhi Chinthapatla, Publicity Chair, Nutrition, BPSH

Sophie To, Social Chair, Health Behavior, PhD

Maleka Walker, Historian, Health Behavior, MSPH/PhD

Vanessa Amankwaa, Education and Community Action Co-Chair, Equity MPH

Brandon Adams, Education and Community Action Co-Chair, Global Health MPH

Eduardo Hernandez, Taking Responsibility to Increase Access and Diversity (TRIAD) Co-Chair, Health Behavior, MPH

Trevor Hamlett, Taking Responsibility to Increase Access and Diversity (TRIAD) Co-Chair, Nutrition, MPH/RD

Rachel Singley, MHC Co-Chair, Health Policy & Management, MSPH/PhD

Shewit Weldense, MHC Co-Chair, Health Policy & Management, MSPH