

June 3, 2020

**Shane Que Hee, Interim Chair of Environmental Health Sciences**  
**Ronald Brookmeyer, Dean Fielding School of Public Health**  
**Yifang Zhu, Associate Dean of Academic Programs**  
**Adelin Lo, EHS Department Manager**  
**Susana Luis, Student Academic Officer**

**CC:**

Elizabeth Yzquierdo, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs  
Janae Hubbard, Equity Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager

**RE: Request for Statement and Action**

Dear UCLA Department of Environmental Health Sciences Faculty,

We hope you are safe and well given the events of the past few months and days. We are writing to express our strong support for the Department of Environmental Health Sciences to make a public statement against the unjust murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, and George Floyd - amongst the countless other Black lives that have been lost. The Black community has been dealt with two pandemics - COVID-19 and a longstanding struggle with police brutality targeting unarmed Black individuals.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, students and residents of Los Angeles took to the streets of Westwood to protest the killing of George Floyd - a new symbol of the targeting of Black bodies by police departments across the nation. In response to the peaceful protests, police and the National Guard arrested these same protestors, detaining and processing them at UCLA's Jackie Robinson Stadium.

At this moment in time, we have yet to hear from the Department of Environmental Health Sciences, housed within the Fielding School of Public Health, on the support of the graduate students.

Graduate students are facing unprecedented emotional and logistical burdens that will make it challenging to finish this quarter. Many students of color are burdened with emotional labor, such as being pressured and provoked by white students to explain societal race relations at this time. Evidence has shown that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color in terms of both health and financial stability.

The current anger and fear is having a significant negative impact on many graduate students. Trauma takes many forms, including the effects of tragic events like the death of George Floyd. It is essential that the department acknowledges, understands, and vocalizes their awareness of the trauma and grief experienced by students of color.

UCLA does not require FSPH professors to be lenient with classes during the pandemic. Already students struggle through vigorous lessons while worrying about their families' safety and wellbeing during this pandemic. We oppose the FSPH department's complicity in the arrests of protestors demonstrating for Black lives.

**By forcing students to continue with schooling, it shows that the department does not care about the mental wellbeing of students of color during the current events.**

With finals week approaching, it is essential that the department acknowledges and speaks out about the action items below that place Black FSPH students first.

We propose that you consider the following:

1. Send an email to all students, faculty, and staff affiliated with our department expressing a clear stance against the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, George Floyd, and countless Black lives, both known and unknown.
2. The email sent on May 31<sup>st</sup>, titled "As public health citizens, we cannot be silent," by Dr. Brookmeyer stated that "this moment requires action". We are not only seeking out mental health resources but concrete strategies that FSPH and our department will pursue in alleviating students' anxiety and stress while addressing student trauma. This includes having departmental safe spaces for students to discuss the impacts of current events.
3. Require all professors in our department to accommodate student requests for final exam and final paper extensions due to emotional and logistical burdens associated with the recent murder of Black lives, protests, or COVID-19. To prevent a burden on TAs and faculty, extend grade submission deadlines for faculty upon request.
4. Require training for EHS faculty and students on systemic racism and its relation to environmental health. Addressing racism directly, particularly anti-Blackness and white supremacy, in all of our EHS educational curriculum, and research. The links between environmental pollution in air, water, soil and built environments and racial inequity are numerous. The best predictor of living near a hazardous waste site is skin color. The health consequences of long-term exposure to environmental hazards is an underlying mechanism leading to the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 deaths borne by the

Black community. As environmental health experts at a leading public university we have a mission to confront environmental racism head-on and advance environmental justice.

- a. For faculty and staff, this includes acknowledging how these systems are perpetuated within our classes. Actionable items include implicit bias training for staff and students, and actively evaluating how coursework is perpetuating or promoting inequalities and racism.
  - b. For students, the development of a committee tasked with addressing racial injustice and its presence in institutions is imperative for this department. Creating mandatory weekly (or monthly, depending on capacity) department discussions to address these issues. This committee will be led by students for students so that we foster an environment of accountability from our peers.
5. Establish a committee made up of students and faculty to hold those perpetuating racism and anti-Blackness accountable. Students are asked to submit evaluations at the end of each term, but transparency on consequences and disciplinary actions are lacking. Therefore, follow up on such evaluations should be addressed publicly with students, and changes should be evaluated and measured on a continuous basis. Students who speak up about microaggressions or experienced racism and anti-Blackness need to be protected from retaliation by faculty and/or students.
6. Hire more Black Faculty across departments and support the retention for academics. We need you to work towards actively dismantling a system that was made to suppress the Black voice.

Please respond publicly to the following requests no later than **Friday, June 12th**

Sincerely,

Concerned students (and alumni) of the Environmental Health Sciences Department

1. Tamar Galindo	2. Sol Dressa
3. Consuela Abotsi-Kowu	4. Thomas Harper
5. Wendy Miranda Arevalo	6. Tessa Sandoval
7. Jocelyn Castellanos	8. Patrick Seaman

9. Zarreen Amin	10. Lizbeth Diaz
11. Supasara Prasertphong	12. Sarah Ziemer
13. Wendell Kirkman	14. Christina Batteate
15. Tiffany Nam	16. Farzan Oroumiyeh
17. Angélica Ruiz	18. Sarah Barney
19. Robert Schupp	20. Elena Hernandez
21. Gabriel Albano	22. Marion Peralta
23. Nakeisha Seymore	24. Carla Adolphus
25. Monica Curtin	26. Donna Heydar
26. Ingrid Oto	27. Abou Ibrahim-Biangoro
27. Charlene Nguyen	28. Antonio Zapata
29. Yu-Han Chen	30. Jimmy Tran
31. Jayhee An	32. Rae Spriggs
33. Chloe Quinlan	34. Cristina Valadez
35. Rachel Swan	36. Joyce Thung
37. Brian Hsiao	38. Ruth Hwang