

## THE AFRICANA STUDIES DEPARTMENT STATEMENT REGARDING THE URGENCY OF A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROCESS

At this profound moment in history, we are collectively witnessing the simultaneous impact of twinned pandemics each lethal and devastating in their own way. The history of Black communities in the Americas has been rich with these experiences of mass uprisings and rebellions, from the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved African peoples to plantation economies and enslaved labor to the genociding and ongoing dispossession of African and Native peoples to Reconstruction, Black Codes, and Jim Crow to the Civil Rights, Black Power and Black Lives Matter movements. Black Freedom struggles have often demanded that the nation engage in what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called a national democratic revolution. While the terror and injustice of these histories are national phenomena for African-descended peoples in the United States, their legacies of dehumanization and underdevelopment globally occur throughout the African diaspora. The shame of European colonization, enslavement, violence and theft is that all human beings, given our ancestral connections and genetic origins, share a common ancestry to Africa. In a Eurocentric White supremacist world, “Blackness” still remains a death sentence.

The current national and worldwide uprisings sparked by the senseless killing of Breonna Taylor and the flagrant lynchings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks illuminate the deep pain, anger, and historical trauma of Black people. They are tragic reminders of Boston’s own victims of police violence, from Frank Lynch to Terrance Coleman. These mass protests are a total rejection of a profoundly unfair and unequal society that has continuously shown a complete and continued disregard for the sanctity of Black life and its cultural, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual existence.

This disregard for Black life weighs heavily on our Black and Brown students, staff, and faculty who are made to feel that their contributions, and thus their lives, do not matter and who become, as a result of such ongoing intergenerational trauma, “invisible” to the institution and, most tragically, sometimes to themselves. The role of education, especially for a publicly funded institution, must take into consideration this damaging impact not only for Black students but also for White students who have internalized their own superiority vis-a-vis “Whiteness.” We must go beyond the pretty rhetoric of the University’s press releases that congratulate itself for diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism, yet continue to allow the elephant of White supremacy and Eurocentric ideologies to go unnamed and unchallenged in its institutional structures.

This hypocrisy with respect to what the University says it values and what it actually does in maintaining the *status quo* must cease. We must all be honest and sincere brokers of a new way in order to produce a new campus community that is part of a new democratic society. The Africana Studies Department has repeatedly addressed this contradiction and the negligence on the part of the University in regards to its treatment of students, staff, and faculty of color. While some changes have been made to repair the damage done by the university to the department, those changes have been both insufficient and have failed to address the larger issues of racial and gender equity for faculty of color. UMass Boston has failed to acknowledge the leadership of faculty of color who have creatively and innovatively contributed to solutions to address the impacts that these broader failures have had on student learning and student development. It has particularly failed to acknowledge the Department for its work, its leadership, and its

achievements in consistently undoing the damage the institution does to students by imposing onto them its White supremacist and Eurocentric worldview.

## THE AFRICANA STUDIES DEPARTMENT'S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DEMANDS

The following Restorative Justice demands emerged in 2017 out of a unified struggle on behalf of students, staff, faculty and the broader local community. The focus of the struggle was to remedy both immediate and long-term issues regarding racial and gender inequities and their impact on our students, staff, faculty, and our surrounding communities. We are returning to this process because the content of the issues raised even a few years ago are far more critical, urgent, and salient today. The failure of the administration to do the necessary adaptive work to honor and to respond to these concerns has contributed to the conditions of the crisis in which we now find ourselves. In the interest of restorative justice and healing, we call upon the administration to provide immediate resources and support to initiate the process of repairing and making whole the well-being of our students, staff, faculty, and communities of color.

1. We call upon the University to be actively engaging in the process of becoming an anti-racist institution and declaring publicly that they are committed to this process.
2. In order to achieve that objective, the University must mandate that ALL students cannot graduate without taking two courses: (1) AFRSTY 101, "Introduction to Africana Studies" (within their first or second year at UMB), and (2) another course from a cluster of courses (to be determined) across departments that fulfill critical race, gender and intersectional analyses, anti-colonial, and African diasporic requirements.
3. Restore our department to a minimum full-time, tenure-track faculty base with 4.0 FTE in addition to current numbers.
4. Require Undoing Racism Training workshops and forums for ALL faculty, administrative, and staff personnel at UMB by the People's Institute (<https://www.pisab.org>) in order to create an environment which gives us a common framework and language to engage in meaningful and transformative dialogue. The common framework will allow us to chart a path and establish a process for substantive change.
5. Affirm the need for an applied research and community development/service center of the Africana Studies Department.
6. Support and provide appropriate institutional space for the applied research and community development/service center of the Africana Studies Department.
7. Provide resources for a full-time administrative assistant and work study assistants for the applied research and community development/service center of the Africana Studies Department.

8. Provide fiscal support to the Africana Studies Department for planning and implementation programs in honor of the Department's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022-2023.
9. Establish mentoring and support services for students' needs that are jointly structured through the Africana Studies Department and Student Services. This mentoring and student support must not only include academic tutoring, but also personal, cultural and social well-being.
10. Provide mentoring and support for tenure-track faculty intended to lead to tenure.
11. Address salary anomalies for non-tenure track faculty who have served in the position of lecturers and senior lecturers.
12. Engage institutional units and community-based partners in an innovative, credit offering, mutually beneficial process of student, professional, community and institutional development. The *CommUniversity* will be the vehicle through which such a process of synergistic human and community transformation occurs.
13. Support and sustain the public education mandate for heritage studies and bilingual curricula which offers fertile ground for us to develop such an initiative at this time. Provide additional resources to collaborate with the William Monroe Trotter Institute in facilitating heritage studies training and research for this public education project. (Our institution continues to claim they are unable to find competently trained, knowledgeable personnel in these areas. We have the capacity to help build the "pipeline" necessary to meet this growing demand.)
14. Fulfill the development of the Africana Studies Department by providing resources to establish a Masters/PhD program as well as pre- and post-doctoral programs in the department.
15. Implement steps to assure the University and broader community that the reputations of the Africana Studies Department faculty harmed by unjust institutional action be made whole and publicly acknowledged. (A pattern of discriminatory actions on the part of the University has been habitual. It must be made visible and reckoned with by this restorative justice process. The restorative justice process is intended to address the historical discriminatory actions that have led to federal and state actions.)
16. Administrative accountability must be mandated to ensure that implementation of this restorative justice process will be monitored, that its implementation will become an essential element in annual evaluations of administrators, and that they will be linked to promotion and salary increases.