



Northern Illinois University

The Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities and the Black Faculty and Staff Association mourn with the families of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Aubrey, and George Floyd, as they are the latest Black Lives lost to the violence inherent in the systemic racism and white supremacist ideology that are all too pervasive in our society today. We stand with those who continue to exercise their First Amendment Right to protest peacefully against police violence and the systemic inequalities that perpetually grip our communities. We would also like to say:

TO OUR STUDENTS: Just like you, our emotions run the gamut, from rage, to sadness, to confusion. We are working to provide you whatever you need to get through these times, whether that is through the Center for Black Studies, the Office of Academic, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, counseling services, or in our classrooms. We are willing to serve as a resource for those engaging in activism as well as those who want to learn about or discuss organizing, action and social or political change, and the roots and realities of systemic racism. We will continue to fight for hiring more African American faculty, staff, and administrators. We will continue to stand with you when you collectively voice your grievances. We will continue to work to make this campus safe for you, and one you can be proud to be a member of and feel you belong.

TO OUR COLLEAGUES: We hope that the events of the past weeks have brought into stark reality the anti-Black, white Supremacist ideology, systemic inequalities and police violence that we have been highlighting and fighting for years. It is no longer enough for you to be merely “not racist”; we need you to be actively *anti-racist*. The work is too broad, and the weight too heavy, for you to be passively on the sidelines. This is not simply about creating spaces for discussion in your classrooms. Rather, it is crucial that your presence be seen at programs and activities encouraging anti-racism. If you feel that your own knowledge about anti-racism is not as robust as some of your other colleagues, it is crucial that you too engage in the virtual town halls, webinars and other upcoming programs to raise your skills and consciousness. Students will be looking toward us to help unpack these issues and it will be crucial to be able to offer your own perspectives and suggestions for more support and knowledge. The fight is now, and we do not need allies, we need accomplices in the fight against the systemic racism that communities of color fight every day.

TO THE BROADER COMMUNITY: We look forward to continuing to engage in constructive dialogues about how to make this community safer for students, staff, faculty and community members of color. We must move beyond the policies and rhetoric that made DeKalb a “sundown town” for too long. We live on your blocks, attend your churches, play in your leagues, and want to feel that true sense of belonging to this community that many take for granted.

While this may be our first statement, it will not be our last. As we develop more concrete action plans, we look forward to working with you all to raise awareness, fight anti-Black thought and action, and move forward. Together. Forward.

Submitted by: Simón E. Weffer-Elizondo and Joseph Flynn on behalf of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities (PCSM) and the Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA)

For upcoming workshops, dialogues and conversations contact Felicia R. Bohanon, PCSM Chair, Acting President BFSA at fbohanon@niu.edu