Solutions Proposed by the Black Community to Improve Racial Equity on Grounds

I. Introduction

For decades, Black students have vocalized their concerns regarding the repeated incidents of racial injustice inflicted upon Black bodies at the University of Virginia. Solutions to these issues have been proposed by organizations such as the Black Student Alliance (BSA), Living Wage Campaign, Student Advocates for Equitable COVID-19 Response, University of Virginia Strike Committee, Towards a Better University, March to Reclaim Grounds and other student leaders who continue to stand up against injustice. It is imperative to reiterate that the following solutions are not independent entities. Rather, the following proposed solutions are a continuation of the work and extensive efforts of past and contemporary members of the Black community at UVA. Thus, our intent is to hold the administration accountable for their lack of urgency in acknowledging and resolving pre-existing issues that affect the existence of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) at UVA.

II. Foreword

A. Statement of United Front

1. As student representatives of the Black Community, we recognize the importance of collaborating with university officials to enact positive change and create a united front. Therefore, we urge the administration to take the following steps in order to ensure that student voices are heard during the decision-making process to implement the proposed solutions:
    a) Create opportunities for direct student representation on the Racial Equity Task Force.
    b) Provide opportunity for a joint-statement written by President James Ryan and student authors of the proposal.
        (1) Press conferences and other forms of public acknowledgements of solutions.
        (2) Opportunity to host a town hall between task force members and students. This town hall would be collaborative instead of punitive. Thus, the town hall would

enable students to offer feasible solutions as opposed to criticizing the university for failed inactions.

c) Full transparency on behalf of the Racial Equity Task Force in regards to implementing the proposed solutions.

(1) Frequent communication between task force members and student leaders via progress emails.

2. As student representatives, we drafted a letter in solidarity for institutional changes in regards to diversity and inclusion on May 31st, 2020. In this letter, we collected signatures from the University Community, past and present, until June 10th, 2020. Over this duration, we were able to draw support from 2,127 UVA organizations and individuals. The breakdown between organizations and individuals is listed below:

a) Organizational Support

(1) 180 Signatures

b) Community Support (Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni)

(1) 1,947 Signatures

B. Roadmap

1. The following solutions have been divided into three subcategories: Immediate, Mid-Term and Long-Term Goals. Each of these categories corresponds with an approximate "action timeline," which is bulleted below:

a) Immediate Goals (1 to 2 years)

b) Mid-Term Goals (2 to 3 years)

c) Long-Term Goals (3 years +)

2. The Black community encourages the administration to act with urgency to implement the following solutions. In addition to the solutions, we as a community, would like to re-emphasize that the previous notion of increased student representation on the Board is quintessential to equity and inclusion work. Therefore, we are requesting council with the Racial Equity Task Force to implement these changes with student voices.

III. Immediate Goals

A. **Reevaluate updated University of Virginia Athletics Logo to address the usage of racist imagery with the incorporation of the Serpentine Walls into the Virginia Saber.**
    1. UVA Athletics should take the necessary steps to address the issue in one of the following ways:
        a) Strip the Serpentine Wall detailing all together out of respect for minority students and to pay homage to those who once labored behind them.
        b) If the Serpentine Wall detailing remains, there must be an official statement connected to the logo that explains the entire history of the wall and the ways in which the logo attempts to reframe that narrative. This action then may be seen as an opportunity to rectify the injustice.

B. **Enact matriculation for all, especially BIPOC, undocumented students at UVA.**
    1. We request that the university follow the examples of George Mason University and other public state institutions in matriculating and supporting all students regardless of immigration status. This action includes students with DACA protections and others with precarious statuses falling under the general category of undocu+.
        a) Background:
            (1) As of early April, Governor Ralph Northam officially signed Senate Bill 935 and House Bill 1547 granting in-state tuition to all Virginians regardless of immigration status[1]. However, this would not have been possible without the incessant work of community and student leaders including but not limited to undocUVA (formerly DREAMers on Grounds).
                (a) Senate Bill 935 & House Bill 1547 were passed to ensure a more equitable and accessible pathway to higher education. Additionally, the bills emphasize that various universities within the Commonwealth

have institutional discretion in matriculation policy. President James Ryan has verbally expressed his alignment with matriculating, providing financial support, and aiding undocu+ students. However, there is no clear policy outlining the matriculation of undocu+ students at the University of Virginia, nor has there been transparent communication on the steps the university is taking to push for undocu+ matriculation.

b) Current Actions:

(1) The university has developed a system allowing undocumented students to pay application fees, get accepted, and pay their deposit. However, students are frequently not allowed to enroll when asked for evidence of immigration status. The university's purpose can be achieved through[1] the legitimate matriculation of all students regardless of immigration status.

2. Proper resources to thrive:
    a) A representative in Student Financial Services who is versed on immigration education policy in regards to how it impacts UVA.
    b) Clear details on Admissions pages that outline matriculation and application policies for students of distinct documentation statuses.
    c) Providing institutional financial aid to students to undocu+ students.
    d) A full-time Undocumented Student Coordinator, under Multicultural Student Services and the Office of the Dean of Students, who would be responsible for assisting and advocating for the undocu+ students present at the university upon matriculation.
3. As noted by undocUVA (formerly DREAMers on Grounds),
    a) *"Inclusivity does not even mean matriculating undocumented students. Inclusivity, or in the words of the University, inclusive*

excellence, means providing resources for these students and setting an institutional example of what it means to both listen and respond proactively to the needs of all the students who walk these grounds from the day they arrive."

C. **Erect clear public signs on sidewalks and lawns to commemorate enslaved laborers in spaces, such as the Gooch-Dillard Residential area, throughout the university.**

1. We urge the administration to include the following aspects when erecting public signage:
    a) Upright signs
        (1) The signs must be upright so that people can easily identify and read them from a distance. Unlike the existing enslaved memorial under the Rotunda, upright signs properly pay homage to the enslaved laborers who built the university.
    b) Pay homage to the stories and narratives of enslaved laborers.
        (1) Stories and narratives may be written on plaques that accompany the signage.

D. **Pay all UVA workers and employees comprehensive hazard pay.**

1. Due to the financial recession caused by COVID-19, all university employees must receive compensation for working regular hours during the pandemic.
2. The university should provide all of its employees with a living wage contingent upon the state in which they reside in. (Guidelines expanded upon in The Living Wage Campaign).
    a) A majority of UVA workers who receive hourly wages are BIPOC. In fact, on average, Black and Brown workers make less than their white counterparts [1]. The university should take the necessary steps to address racial inequities and examine the extent of class inequality [2].

3. The university must strongly urge Aramark and other university contractors to provide comprehensive hazard pay for contracted employees.

IV. Mid-Term Goals

A. **Replace the current implicit bias module offered to incoming students with a new module focused on the history of UVA.**

1. We propose that the university requires all incoming students to complete engaging modules that present a nuanced detailing of the history of racism at UVA. This module must be focused on the macro and micro levels of racism as it pertains to systemic racism at the university and beyond. These modules should also contain activities and educational videos similar to the one that was proposed by the Latinx Leadership Institute in Spring 2020. This content would be effective in equipping incoming students with the background knowledge necessary to become anti-racist. To reinforce the gravity of this subject, RAs should review the content with residents in the beginning of each year.

B. **Provide comprehensive anti-racism training for all Residential Advisors, Senior Advisors and HRL staff members.**

1. Reading requirements in order to fulfill the role
    a) RAs must read the following pieces prior to Orientation Week:
        (1) President's Commission on Slavery and the University
        (2) Research and Findings on President's Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation
        (3) White Fragility by Robin DiAngleo.
2. Train RAs to lead group discussions on cultural competencies and implicit biases.
3. We urge the administration to work in partnership with Housing and Residential Life leadership to increase the amount of BIPOC Residential Advisors and Senior Advisors on Grounds.

C. **Provide required, comprehensive programming at New Student Orientation regarding the university's history of slavery and racial injustice.**

1. As a representative body of the Black Community, we request that the administration provides a comprehensive program to incoming first-year students known as “Unpacking Privilege.” We envision that this program would last for a duration of ninety minutes with three thirty minutes sessions on the following topics: The History of Slavery at UVA, Systemic Racism, and Privilege. The programming would be facilitated by officials from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Additionally, we strongly recommend that the presentation includes input from the Dean of Students and personnel from the 1619 Project. The program may also incorporate the teachings of Dean Tabitha Enoch and other university leaders who specialize in diversity training. We want to emphasize that the programming is meant to be a comprehensive “crash course.” Thus, the program will not go into substantial detail as incoming first-years will have to complete a more in-depth module on race and UVA as previously stated in the document.
2. Recommended presentation content:
    a) Session one: The History of Slavery at UVA
        (1) Focusing on the university’s treatment and recognition of enslaved laborers.
        (2) Discussing the remnants of race embedded into the architectural framework of the university.
            (a) The initial height of the Serpentine Walls
            (b) Rugby Road
            (c) The placement of Old Cabell Hall
            (d) Unmarked graves of enslaved laborers near the Gooch-Dillard residential area
    b) Session two: Systemic Racism
        (1) Focusing on the way in which the implications of race pervade higher education and learning within the classroom.
            (a) Microaggressions

(b) "Busting" the myth of affirmative action and the impact that narrative has on Black bodies.

(c) Understanding and engaging with difference.

c) Session three: Privilege

(1) Focusing on the way in which white privilege is ingrained heavily into American systems.

(a) The implication of "whiteness" as a power construct

(b) Socioeconomic status and class as it pertains to privilege

(c) Athletic privilege

3. This session could be facilitated in two of the following ways:

a) Lecture style

(1) Ninety minutes of lecture-style instruction followed by thirty additional minutes of debriefing. The debriefing period would be facilitated by the Orientation Leaders who would receive training on unpacking privilege during the OL pre-training. We envision that the debriefing sessions would contain no more than twenty-five students and there would be ample opportunity for questions.

b) Combined Lecture and Discussion

(1) Similar to course registration, we could have approximately twelve groups of students visit Clem 2 to receive this instruction. The instruction will be interactive and allow for collaborative dialogue between facilitators, Orientation Leaders, and incoming first-year students.

4. Furthermore, it is imperative to reiterate that this is not a well-intentioned suggestion, but rather a fundamental necessity. The above content is the bare minimum and we encourage the administration to expand upon the suggested topics. Although we recognize the efforts made by the administration to make orientation the best experience possible, the programming is lacking an essential feature--dialogue of race and racism in order to gain a better understanding of place.

D. **Recommit to efforts of diversity and inclusion within the University Judiciary Committee (UJC) and Honor in the following ways:**

1. Increase bias and cultural competency training for all members.
    a) The Honor and University Judiciary Committees were established to create a unified community of trust, freedom, and safety. However, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) students have been disproportionately affected by these committees for decades. Due to the increased push for our country to eliminate systemic racism in the judicial system, we strongly urge that our university's judicial system follows suit. We call upon administrators to implement this additional training to correct for biases and prejudices, whether implicit or not, in the investigation and litigation processes.
2. Address the lack of leadership positions held by BIPOC students within the University Judiciary and Honor Committees.
    a) More specifically, the University Judiciary Committee should ensure that BIPOC students are equally represented among Counselors and Investigators. Within Honor, there must be more diversity among the representatives from each school within the university on the undergraduate and graduate level.
3. Increase outreach initiatives by Honor and University Judiciary Committees in an effort to recruit more BIPOC students to take part in their organizations.
    a) For example, utilizing the UJC Educators to host information sessions in tandem with BIPOC organizations such as the Black Student Alliance to increase diversity enrollment.

E. **Create more professorships, fellowships, and tenure-track opportunities for Black faculty entering the university in order to:**

1. Increase the number of courses available to undergraduate students that specifically focus on the history of Black activism and Black politics at UVA.
2. Aid in the diversification of staff throughout the university.

a) We urge the administration to hire more Black professors in all schools after the hiring freeze.
b) Incentivize potential applicants with scholarship opportunities for their children.

F. **Reevaluate the university's relationship with the University and Charlottesville Police Department.**

1. In the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others at the hands of law enforcement, the Black community encourages the administration to enact feasible changes in policing. On a micro-level, UVA student, Martese Johnson, was beaten and arrested on the Corner by the police. Due to the lack of sufficient allocations of funds designated to improve the physical, emotional, and psychological support of students of color, Johnson was failed by an institution that vowed to protect him. Similar to the actions taken by BSA in 2015 [3] and many other organizations, we urge the UVA administration to reevaluate its ties with the Charlottesville Police. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
    a) Reallocate an appropriate amount of funds used to support UVA's relationship with the Charlottesville Police to community programs. The leadership within the community programs would be responsible for determining which measures are most appropriate for maintaining safety and security at UVA. This initiative would increase protection for BIPOC students in public spaces across Grounds.
    b) Reallocate funds to increase the number of Ambassadors and social workers on Grounds. Mimicking the approach made in Dallas, Texas, UVA emergency systems would dispatch social workers for mental health-related emergencies.

G. **Endow the Carter G. Woodson Institute, specifically the Fellowship program and Expanding the Institute to occupy all of Minor Hall**

1. Since its inception in 1981, the Carter G. Woodson Institute has provided Africana Studies for university students. The Institute's Pre and Post-

doctoral Fellowship programs have produced over a hundred scholars who have gone on to be employed in many prominent institutions throughout the country. Thus, the Woodson Institute is a crucial source for the training and distribution of Africana Studies. In addition, the Carter G. Woodson Institute has provided unilateral support for African-American and African Studies (AAS) Majors, faculty, and those who are entering the well-renowned fellowship program. The current political climate has exposed the underlying presence of systemic racism and injustice world-wide. Therefore, now, more than ever, there is an increasing need for students to be equipped to facilitate conversations regarding race.

2. The Black Community proposes that the university expands Africana Studies by endowing the Woodson Institute. Endowments are essential to preserving the longevity and success of departments. The university has endowed several other departments, such as the Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics and the Mcintire School of Music. We, as a representative student body, strongly believe that Africana Studies is a quintessential aspect of the university that requires substantial endowment.
    a. The university has promised to expand the Carter G. Woodson Institute to occupy all of Minor Hall by 2021. The university should provide the Carter G. Woodson Institute with the entirety of Minor Hall to accommodate more space for additional faculty, fellowships, and professors. This action would display the university's support and acknowledgement of Africana Studies as a core field of study.

V. Long-Term Goals

A. **Require all students to take a course on race and ethnic relations in America as a requirement to graduate throughout the university.**

1. As a result of the university's complex history of enslavement and confederate values, incorporating anti-racist teachings is fundamental to transforming the overall embodiment of the university's values. While this change serves as a form of rectification for UVA's previous involvement

in perpetuating systemic racism, it will also illustrate zero-tolerance for acts of injustice.

a) Consider mass curriculum infusion with topics regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. These courses should be modeled after existing race and ethnic relation courses to avoid politicizing the content.
3. This requirement must be fulfilled at UVA for non-transfer UVA students. However, transfer students can find an equivalent at their respected institution prior to transferring. If the transfer student has not completed the requirement prior to matriculating into the university, they must complete it prior to graduation.

B. **Scholarship programs specifically for students who are descendants of enslaved laborers who built the University and surrounding Charlottesville community.**

1. We propose that students who have descended from enslaved laborers should be provided with scholarship opportunities for all academic schools at UVA.
    a) The university must contact known descendants and inform them of scholarship opportunities. Additionally, the administration must continue to undergo the process of excavating records of unknown descendants in order to inform them. If a family can provide information that proves their ancestors worked at the university, they too will be provided with pertinent scholarship opportunities.
    b) The scholarship opportunities may extend to multiple members of the same family without limits.
    c) Consult Genealogist Shelley Murphy on scholarship criteria and the ways in which UVA may effectively rectify past injustices in regards to enslaved laborers by August 2025.

VI. Conclusion

A. Call to Action

a. With the current racial tensions surrounding UVA and the United States of America, it is more important than ever to take necessary steps towards

institutional healing. In working together to implement the above solutions, the administration may orchestrate a new relationship between marginalized students and the university.

b. The university should commit itself to the Inclusive Excellence Framework that solidifies the need for cooperation among various facets of the institution. More specifically, the interconnected framework highlights the importance of goal-setting in order to increase transparency between administration and students. The following is included in the framework that is utilized by the UVA Office of Diversity and Inclusion:

    i. Access & Success, Organizational Infrastructure, Training and Education, Organizational Climate and Intergroup Relations, and Community Engagement.

B. Gratitude

a. As the authors, we would like to thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. In the spirit of improvement and student self-governance, we as student representatives, play a vital role as the architects of change. UVA can set the precedent, within higher education, for collaborating with community members to actively rectify past and present institutional discrimination. Thus, UVA must demonstrate responsible actions of diversity, equity and inclusion now and in the future.

In solidarity, the authors,

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