UVA Alumni for Change Letter to President Sullivan:

Dear President Sullivan:

This weekend marks the 30th anniversary of Black Alumni Weekend; a tradition begun to address the herculean task of engendering goodwill between the University and the thousands of Black alumni whom have walked the lawn since the first meaningful numbers of our population began to be admitted as students in the early 1970s. Over this span many of us have raised our voices, protested, donated, and partnered with mutual stakeholders to push the University, our University, to confront its history while remaining deeply vested in its future. Our deep and abiding love for the University of Virginia impels us to push toward the lofty principals articulated by its progenitor. Each of us did this work and engaged in these arduous efforts in hopes that even in some incremental, though ever increasing way, an ever more robust generations of Black students would finally be able to experience the Academical Village in all of its affirming promise and glory.

Unfortunately, as the deplorable, horrific attack, and prosecution of Martese Johnson has demonstrated, this hope remains unfulfilled as yet another dream deferred.

Yet it need not be so.

Today, we call upon you as President of this prestigious University to do what your predecessors have not chosen to do: join us and say ‘no further, no longer'. Commit to doing all that can be done to ensure that our wait for access and justice goes no further than this moment. Commit to doing all that can be done to ensure that we no longer have to wait to transform the University into an ecosystem that gives no fertile ground to racism. Commit to dismantle the institutional indifference and culture of ignorance and intolerance that have permitted the continual denial of Black excellence. From offensive “articles” in the Cavalier Daily to ongoing critiques of venerable resource centers such as the Office of African American Affairs, more must be done to directly confront the environment that allows injustice to flourish.

We recognize that you might well find these commitments easy to embrace rhetorically, but far more difficult to operationalize. To that end, we have the following recommendations that, if implemented, will begin to meaningfully advance us down the path of the concrete expression and realization of these commitments:

1) Ensure that no honor or judicial charges are advanced against Martese Johnson.

2) Direct the Office of Admissions to set and operationalize a goal of tripling the number of enrolled Black students by 2020.

3) Require all students to take a “History of the University” course that directly addresses the role of enslaved labor.

4) Grow and fully fund the African American Studies department.

5) Address issues of implicit bias and cultural awareness for all faculty.

6) Set and operationalize a goal to increase the number of Black tenured faculty to at least 15% by 2020.

7) Grow and fully fund the Office of African American Affairs, the Carter G. Woodson Institute, and the Luther P. Jackson House.

8) Finally and fully implement ALL of the recommendations outlined in “Audacious Faith” and its follow up reports/evaluations.

9) Establish a President's Advisory Council for Black Alumni (which includes the senior University Administrators) who can serve as a ‘kitchen cabinet' to your office to provide advice and guidance in the strategic planning and implementation of the above and other such recommendations.

The time has come for us to move beyond hoping and wishing this will all resolve itself. It is time for “Audacious Action”. We fully realize that this has been a difficult year for the University. And as concerned Alumni we stand ready and willing to assist wherever needed. We ask you to commit to this course and join us in stating and acting unequivocally that time will go no further. We can no longer to ACT!

In unity,

UVA Alumni For Change

[Digital Source: http://www.nbc29.com/story/28779804/uva-alumni-for-change-hold-rally-and-deliver-letter-to-uva-president]