October 26, 2020

LETTER OF CONCERN FROM NORTHWESTERN FACULTY AND STAFF

Dear President Schapiro:

As a coalition of faculty and staff members of Northwestern University from a broad range of departments and units, we write today to express our deep dismay at your response to recent student protests about the pervasiveness of anti-Black violence and the long history and current nature of much policing in this country. To write so dismissively to students of this University who have dedicated significant thought, time, and energy to making their voices heard in an institution that has been largely unresponsive to their articulated concerns is unacceptable. To suggest that our students should feel “ashamed” or that they “have lost their humanity” while expressing “disgust” at their actions is to deploy a language that rhetorically diminishes them and demonstrates a sense of superiority over them, whether such was the intention or not.

We will not replicate here the content of the powerful letters recently sent to you by our Black and African American Studies colleagues. Their precision in illuminating the gravity of your continued refusal to engage our community’s reasoned requests for engagement, accountability, and respect speaks for itself. We write here, however, to express our strong support for them and for our BIPOC students and staff colleagues, and to assert strenuously that all have the right to protest and redress historic injustices and to protect our communities from violence and hate. Many of us who sign this letter are white. At a predominantly white institution like Northwestern, we think it important to say that in order to disrupt any assumption that we condone the inequities of the racialized status quo. We do not, and affirm that these issues matter to us and require our urgent and intentional action.

We share our colleagues’ conviction that your responses, and those of the University administration at large, to ongoing instances of violence at the campus, local, state, and national levels have been inadequate, bureaucratic, and complacent. We also feel that our individual colleagues who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color—as well as academic units like the Department of African American Studies, and various campus offices devoted to DEI issues—to often stand alone in their public denunciations of anti-Black and racist histories, patterns, and practices at the University. This enormous problem is compounded by your administration’s quick and curt dismissals of their expertise in these matters, which we have witnessed repeatedly, including in recent weeks. We see a comparable, continual lack of engagement with BIPOC students in relation to the anti-Blackness and racism they identify and denounce across the campus, sustained over long periods of time.
Month after month, you have distributed muted, highly abstract, and non-specific statements about several traumatic events, here on campus or elsewhere in the nation—including the murders and maimings of Black people of all genders at the hands of police, who routinely suffer no repercussion. What these difficult times call for is a leader who acts not precipitously or on the basis of personal experience only. Rather, what we need is someone who can listen to the experiences and felt pain of others; who can recognize that such feelings and the demands they give rise to are important even though they can sometimes be in conflict; and who can find a way to imagine, cultivate, and lead the way to a common ground we can all occupy together. As educators, teachers, scholars, intellectuals, activists, and front-line student support staff, we join our peers in insisting that you find a way to model such leadership in these desperate times.

Signed,

Janice Radway, Gender & Sexuality Studies and Communication Studies/Rhetoric and Public Culture
Paola Zamperini, Gender & Sexuality Studies and Asian Languages and Cultures
Tessie Liu, Gender & Sexuality Studies and History
Nick Davis, Gender & Sexuality Studies and English
Jillana Enteen, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Amy Partridge, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Eliot Colin, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Ann Orloff, Sociology and Gender & Sexuality Studies
Ryan Dohoney, Music and Gender & Sexuality Studies
Kate Masur, History, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and African American Studies
Kyle Henry, Radio/Television/Film
Wendy Wall, English
Jessica Winegar, Anthropology and Middle East and North African Studies
Ariel Rogers, Radio/Television/Film
Kathleen Berzock, Block Museum of Art
Mimi White, Radio/Television/Film

Anna Parkinson, German, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Jewish Studies, and Critical Theory

Erica Weitzman, German

Jules Law, English

Lynn Spigel, Radio/Television/Film

Daniel Immerwahr, History

Kylie Renee Clark, Radio/Television/Film

Catherine Carrigan, Radio/Television/Film

Corey Byrnes, Asian Languages and Cultures and Comparative Literary Studies

Freda Love Smith, Radio/Television/Film

Susan Manning, English, Theatre, and Performance Studies

Rebecca Johnson, English, Middle East and North African Studies, and Comparative Literary Studies

Alessia Ricciardi, Comparative Literary Studies

Kelly Wisecup, English and CNAIR

Kasey Evans, English and Gender & Sexuality Studies

James J. Hodge, English and the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities

Cesar Braga-Pinto, Spanish and Portuguese

Patrick Eccles, Global Learning Office

Nasrin Qader, French & Italian and Comparative Literary Studies

Betsy Erkkila, English

Stephan Moore, Radio/Television/Film
Val Buchanan, Leadership Development and Community Engagement
Evan Mwangi, English
Courtney Essenpreis, German
Julia Stern, English
Eric Patrick, Radio/Television/Film
Mary G. Dietz, Gender & Sexuality Studies and Political Science
Susannah Gottlieb, English and Comparative Literary Studies
Caitlin Fitz, History
Christine Helmer, German
Katharine Breen, English
Penelope Deutscher, Philosophy
Helen Tilley, History
Ji-Yeon Yuh, History and American Studies
Lauren Pourian, AccessibleNU
Joanna Grisinger, Legal Studies
Liz McCabe, Chicago Field Studies
Robert Orsi, Religious Studies, History, and American Studies
Emily Maguire, Spanish & Portuguese and Latinx Studies
Ray San Diego, Asian American Studies
Michael Rakowitz, Art Theory & Practice
Robert Launay, Anthropology
Melissa Rosenzweig, Environmental Policy & Culture and Anthropology

Joshua Chambers-Letson, Performance Studies

Cynthia Robin, Anthropology

Susan Pearson, History

Harris Feinsod, English

Clayton Brown, Radio/TV/Film

Stephanie Knezz, Chemistry

Sean Hanretta, History

Cheryl Jue, Asian American Studies

Michelle Huang, English and Asian American Studies

Kalyan Nadiminti, English

Alissa Levy Chung, Psychology

Hamid Naficy, Radio/TV/Film

Wendy Pearlman, Political Science and Middle East and North Africa Studies

David Schoenbrun, History

Christiane Rey, French and Italian

Mark Hauser, Anthropology

Megan Geigner, Writing Program

Michael Maltenfort, Mathematics and Weinberg College Advising

Autumn Bryant, English Language Programs, The Graduate School

Rajeev Kinra, History, Comparative Literary Studies, ALC, MENA, ISP

Amanda Logan, Anthropology
Shirin Vossoughi, Learning Sciences, SESP
Susie Phillips, English
Fatima Khan, Middle East and North African Languages
Jason Seawright, Political Science
Jennifer Alexander, Linguistics and The Graduate School
Michaela Kleber, History and CNAIR
Lakshmi Padmanabhan, Radio/Television/Film
Julia Moore, Linguistics
Paula Hooper, SESP
Sheila Donohue, English
Liz Son, Theatre
Steven Epstein, Sociology
Julie Lee Merseth, Political Science
Ruth Curry, Center for Civic Engagement
Emrah Yıldız, Anthropology & Middle East and North African Studies
Gregory Ward, Linguistics, Philosophy, and Gender & Sexuality Studies
Sarah Maza, History
Mary Weismantel, Anthropology
Ida Yalzadeh, Asian American Studies
Jane Winston, French and Italian
Noelle Sullivan, Global Health Studies
Kristen Perkins-LaFollette, SESP

Laura Brueck, Asian Languages and Cultures

Laura Kipnis, Radio/Television/Film

Patrick Noonan, Asian Languages and Cultures and Comparative Literary Studies

Doug Kiel, History and Kaplan Institute for the Humanities

Penny Nichols, Spanish & Portuguese

David Boyk, Asian Languages and Cultures

Micki Burton, Global Health Studies

Whitney Bennett, Global Learning Office

David Kleineick, Theatre

Andrew Boyce, Theatre

Fadia Antabli, Middle East and North African Languages Program

Cindy Gold, Theatre

John Haas, Theatre

Regina Logan, Human Development & Social Policy, SESP

Dassia Posner, Theatre

William Leonard, Anthropology and Global Health Studies

Marianne Hopman, Classics and Comparative Literary Studies

Brady Clark, Linguistics and Weinberg College Advising

Jonathon Glassman, History

David Catlin, Theatre

Shana Bernstein, American Studies and Legal Studies
Barbara Butts, Theatre
Averill Curdy, English
Tom Burke, Kaplan Institute for the Humanities
Benjamin Frommer, History
Noriko Taira Yasohama, Asian Languages and Cultures
Jacob Smith, Radio/Television/Film
Amanda Dehnert, Theatre
Laura Hein, History
Susanna Calkins, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching
Onnie Rogers, Institute for Policy Research
Ana Arjona, Political Science
Lisa Davidson, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching
Deborah Cohen, History
Matthew Johnson, Anthropology
Diane Knoepke, Learning and Organizational Change
John Bresland, English
So Hye Kim, Asian Languages and Cultures
Jennifer Weintritt, Classics
Sara McGuinn, Global Learning Office, Buffett Institute
Nancy Ruggieri, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching
Brianna Malin, AccessibleNU
Jorge Coronado, Spanish & Portuguese and Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Jeff Merrell, Learning and Organizational Change

Masi Asare, Theatre

Becca Greenstein, University Libraries

John Paluch, German

Peter Locke, Global Health Studies

Michael Perry, University Libraries

J.P. Sniadecki, Radio/Television/Film

Lina Britto, History

Josh Honn, University Libraries

Jamie Carlstone, University Libraries

Marcela Fuentes, Performance Studies and Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Michael Allen, History

Micaela di Leonardo, Anthropology

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Amy Stanley, History

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, Social Justice Education

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Caroline Egan, Spanish and Portuguese

Brent E. Huffman, Medill

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Mariah McGregor, University Libraries
Jennifer Yang, Executive MBA Program, Kellogg School
Mech Frazier, University Libraries
Keith Woodhouse, History
Halena Kays, Theatre
Tristram Wolff, English and Comparative Literary Studies
Yumi Shiojima, Asian Languages and Cultures
Daniel Majchrowicz, Asian Languages and Cultures
Stephanie Teterycz, Chemistry
Eliza Bent, Radio/Television/Film
Michelle Birkett, Medical Social Sciences
Jessica Thebus, Theatre
Jean Clipperton, Political Science and Sociology
Nicholas Bennett, Kellogg Information Systems
Emma Adam, SESP
Kate Banner, ISGMH
Michael Metzger, Block Museum of Art
Özge Samancı, Radio/Television/Film
Adriana Weisleder, Communication Sciences & Disorders
Ginger Jacobson, Kellogg

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Erik Gernand, Radio/Television/Film

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Lauren B Beach, Medical Social Sciences

Shelby A Blythe, Molecular Biosciences

Susan Hespos, Psychology

Spencer Parsons, Radio/Television/Film

Katherine E. Hoffman, Anthropology

Elizabeth Lenaghan, Cook Family Writing Program

Keara Lane, Molecular Biosciences

Shawn Douglass, Theatre

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Liz Hamilton, University Libraries

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Stephanie Brehm, MSHE and SESP
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J. Michelle Molina, Religious Studies
Jennifer Lackey, Philosophy
Steven Thrasher, Medill and ISGMH
Kim Lange, Norris University Center
Heather Pinkett, Molecular Biosciences
Erin Leddon, Linguistics
Laura Schellhardt, Theatre
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Angela Pfammatter, Preventive Medicine
Emily Bettin, Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health (ISGMH)
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Amy Conn, Office of Human Resources
Katie Shelton, Pritzker School of Law

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Maggie Filler, Bluhm Legal Clinic

Brian Keiller, Health Professions Advising

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Ken Paller, Psychology

Ipek Yosmaoglu, History

Brent Turner, Campus Life

David Rapp, SESP and Psychology

Danna Freedman, Chemistry

Sarah Van Wart, Computer Science

Marcia Grabowecky, Psychology

Paul Reber, Psychology

Drew Clower, University Libraries

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Sarah Lawsky, Pritzker School of Law

Roger Ellis, Theatre

Karen Allen, Chicago Field Studies

Tamar Gefen, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Michelle Falkoff, Pritzker School of Law

Barry Wimpfheimer, Religious Studies

Erik C Andersen, Molecular Biosciences
Alan Mills, Pritzker School of Law

Carl Petry, History

Krista Van Der Laan, Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences

Arionne Nettles, Medill

Lisa Beutler, Feinberg School of Medicine

Matt Goldrick, Linguistics