

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—too 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

Ariel Schwartz, Research, Buffett Institute

Brannon Bowers, Theatre

Amy Stanley, History

Chelsea O'Neil Karcher, Social Justice Education

Thomas Gaubatz, Asian Languages and Cultures

Caroline Egan, Spanish and Portuguese

Brent E. Huffman, Medill

Jessica Fetridge, Global Learning Office

CA Davis, Media and Design Studio

Jennifer Young, University Libraries

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

Quinn Mulroy, Human Development and Social Policy, SESP

Erik Gernand, Radio/Television/Film

Abby Rosensweig, Chemistry

Rebecca Weaver-Gill, Academic Operations, Kellogg

Marcelo Worsley, Learning Sciences and Computer Science

Danny M. Cohen, SESP

Lauren Stokes, History

Oriana Kilbourn-Ceron, Linguistics

Michael Peshkin, Mechanical Engineering

Caitlin Willox, Kellogg

Cynthia Coburn, SESP

Ya-Ching Hsu, Asian Languages and Cultures

Elizabeth Lukehart, Farley Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Ivan Albertson, University Libraries

Kimberly Scott, SESP

Ariel Stess, Radio/Television/Film

Reginald Gibbons, English and Classics

Kelly Schaefer, Student Engagement

Karrie Snyder, Sociology

Peter Slevin, Medill

D. Javier Thompson, Kellogg Administration Staff

Richard Zinbarg, Psychology

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

Lee West, Office of the Provost

Caitlin Burnett, SESP Student Affairs

Angela Ray, Communication Studies

Tasia Jones, Theatre

Jeannette Colyvas, SESP

Shelby Hatch, Chemistry and Weinberg College Advising

Megan Bang, SESP and Psychology

Darren Gergle, Communication Studies

Liz Hamilton, University Libraries

Annie Buth, Bluhm Legal Clinic

José Ramón Fernández-Peña, Health Professions Advising

Peter Civetta, Office of Undergraduate Research

Alexa Van Brunt, Law School

Ken Gentry, McCormick School Advising

Kate Harrington-Rosen, Office of Equity

Ava Thompson Greenwell, Medill

Melissa Macauley, History

Sarah Brown, The Women's Center

Felicia Gowanlock, Athletic Academic Services and Student Development

Shauna Seliy, English

Mark Beeman, Psychology

J. Chad Duncan, Prosthetics-Orthotics, Feinberg

Megan Wood, Office of Undergraduate Research

Travis White-Schwoch, Communication Sciences & Disorders

Erika Owen, Kellogg

Lynn Cohn, Law School

Eileen O'Rourke, Athletic Academic Services and Student Development

Laurie Shannon, English

Melisa Stephen, The Women's Center

James Schwoch, Communication Studies

Sheila Bedi, Pritzker School of Law

Jason Kelly Roberts, Office of Fellowships

Danny Postel, Weinberg College Center for International & Area Studies

Shalini Shankar, Anthropology and Asian American Studies

Gregory Phillips II, Medical Social Sciences

Rosemary Bush, Earth and Planetary Sciences

Jason McKean, Office of Equity

Stephanie Brehm, MSHE and SESP

Héctor Carrillo, Sociology and Gender & Sexuality Studies

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

Cindy Wilson, Pritzker School of Law

Evangeline Su, Office of Undergraduate Research

Elizabeth Smith, Anthropology and Weinberg College Advising

Emily Bettin, Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health (ISGMH)

Angela Pfammatter, Preventive Medicine

Emily Bettin, Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health (ISGMH)

Laura Lackner, Molecular Biosciences

Nancy Loeb, Pritzker School of Law

Amy Conn, Office of Human Resources

Katie Shelton, Pritzker School of Law

Alessandra Visconti, French and Italian

Maggie Filler, Bluhm Legal Clinic

Brian Keiller, Health Professions Advising

John Alba Cutler, English

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

Shobha Mahadev, Pritzker School of Law

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