Dear Black Students, Staff, and Faculty at Florida State University,

We, Latinx faculty, write to express our love and support for you, our Black and Afro-Latinx colleagues and students, at a moment when our country is faced with yet another series of irrefutable examples of systemic violence against Black people in the United States. We grieve with you and stand with you.

We condemn the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Tony McDade and the long history of lynching that includes their deaths and so many more before them. We condemn our nation’s socioeconomic and public health disparities that have led to the disproportionate number of deaths of Black people from multiple chronic conditions and most recently the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Racism and white supremacy are pernicious diseases that predate and exacerbate COVID-19. We cannot keep our communities safe, serve our students, or establish best public health practices for FSU, without addressing institutional racism.

We understand that the disproportionate number of Black victims of COVID-19 and of police violence reveal systemic patterns of anti-Black racism that are rooted in the transatlantic slave trade and fundamental to the history of the United States and all nations of the Americas. We therefore understand that this fight and the demands eloquently communicated by our Black FSU colleagues are not new, and that a sustained effort to meet them is urgent and undeniable. In the long-term struggle against all forms of anti-Black racism, we acknowledge that our work starts with fighting anti-Black racism in our own Latinx families and communities.

Black and Latinx lives are inextricably linked. Our communities overlap. People of African descent in Latin America and Afro-Latinx people in the U.S. have fought racism alongside African Americans since the colonial period. The fight continues today. Because the struggle for Latinx freedom is meaningless without Black freedom, we add our voices to the Black faculty’s call for policy changes at FSU. Citing the June 4, 2020 letter Black FSU faculty addressed to Black FSU students, we also strongly recommend that FSU:
1. Acknowledge that all of higher education is complicit if we are not naming and calling out racism and its entangled nature with the injustices of sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism in our work.
2. Provide mentorship networks between Black Faculty, Black Staff, and Black Students across departments and disciplines.
3. Require a First-Year Experience reading curriculum rooted in social and racial justice and First-Year Discussion Group Series. Those who lead these discussion series should be compensated for their labor.
4. Require that All First Year Students (including transfer students) complete a module on the racial history of Tallahassee that focuses on segregation past and present in the city, unrest and race relations, and the historical relationship between FSU and the city, and with FAMU.
5. Create reciprocal partnerships between the University and organizations in the community that are fighting racism, prejudice, injustice, and bigotry.
6. Require that all departments and programs complete the eight hour National Coalition Building Institute training.
7. Require that new faculty and staff hires, including Deans, upper administration, and FSU Board of Trustees members, attend NCBI training within their first six months of being onboarded to FSU.
8. Require that all departments and colleges craft a diversity and inclusion statement and plan that addresses a strategy for increased recruitment, retention, and mentoring for Black students, staff, and faculty that is supported and accounted for within the University Strategic Plan.
9. Create a paid Anti-Racism Task force composed of students, staff, faculty, administrators and individuals from the community that directly reports to the President and Provost. This task force will also build space and create structure for a Vice President for Anti-Racism as a part of the FSU Cabinet.
10. Hold at least two events per semester in conjunction with FAMU (one located on FAMU’s campus and one on FSU’s campus) entitled “Community Conversations” designed to help facilitate dialogue between the two Universities and to address the historical injustices brought on by Florida State University as an institution as well as early alumni and founders of the University.

We recognize that it is our responsibility as Latinx faculty to reckon with hemispheric legacies of slavery, build institutional spaces where all peoples of the African diaspora can come together to learn safely, and cultivate historical and cultural connections between Black and Latinx communities. We believe that serving the Latinx community never comes at the expense of serving Black students, staff, and faculty but rather that serving Black students, staff, and faculty is essential to serving Latinx students, staff, and faculty.
We commit ourselves to prioritizing the anti-racist work of confronting and dismantling all forms of white supremacy and anti-Black racism in our syllabi, our classrooms, our committees, our celebrations, and our budgets. Only through this work can we understand the full complexity of our Latinx communities, embrace the contributions of Afro-Latinx people, and realize anti-racist futures in which Black and Latinx students, staff, and faculty will be integral and equal members of the FSU community.

#BlackLivesMatter
#LasVidasNegrasImportan

Signed,

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