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Short link to this document: <https://tinyurl.com/black-community-needs>

# Centering Black Community Needs

A resource for faculty and staff to engage in difficult conversations and better support students, postdocs, and research staff

Content warning (Cw) designed to facilitate challenging discussion and engagement below  
**Cw: physical violence, police brutality, racism, comprehensive resource roundup**

Introduction:	1
Educate yourself:	3
Honor emotions:	4
Engage with community:	4
Take financial action:	5
Take care of yourself:	5
Hear the voices of your students	6
Provost's guidance on academic accommodations	6
Provide support in your lab	7
Need help getting started?	8

## Introduction:

Dear Biosciences faculty and staff,

We are living through a painful time in our country. Like you, all of us in OGE are horrified by the violent murders of Black people and are angry, sad and hurt over the inequities and injustices that still exist in our country. Our students and postdocs, **especially Black students and postdocs**, are experiencing this anguish in deeply personal ways.

We are a diverse network of programs with many different life experiences. While non-Black colleagues can not personally know the depths of pain that those in the Black community are experiencing now, you know there is pain. When a member of our Biosciences community is in pain, we are all in pain.

In this spirit, the [Office of Graduate Education](#) would like to thank you for everything you are doing to support students during the pandemic and the racial trauma across our nation. **Your leadership, both seen and unseen, is adding value.**

There is a beautiful effort around knowledge-sharing that is happening now. Through the generosity and activism of countless individuals, the resources below have been curated to anticipate your needs at this time. We encourage your ongoing and intentional centering of the needs of our Black Biosciences students and postdocs.

Yours in solidarity,

Will Talbot, Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs, Professor of Developmental Biology

Sheri Krams, Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs, Professor of Surgery - Abdominal Transplantation

David Schneider, Advising Dean for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology

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## Educate yourself:

Lighten the load of marginalized people by seeking to understand Black trauma and exhaustion.

- Commit to spending time exploring numerous [Anti-racism Resources](#)
- [Stanford SPARQtools](#) are digital toolkits that translate research into user-friendly formats to spark psychological, behavioral, and societal change. Each toolkit shares evidence-based materials and resources from that can be put right to use to tackle issues from empowering students to engage across difference
- These books are a great resource for [understanding why people are protesting right now](#)
- [Bryanna Wallace & Autumn Gupta](#) have created [Justice in June](#) to promote self-education at either 10, 25, or 45 minutes per day throughout June.
- The National Museum of African American History and Culture created this website as a resource: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>
- IDEAL Engage [Manager tools to cultivate inclusiveness](#) and have meaningful dialogue
- The [1619 Project](#) - 401 years ago a ship carrying enslaved Africans arrived in the English colony of Virginia. This audio series from The New York Times explores the long shadow of that fateful moment
- This edX class is available for free to anyone (students, faculty, staff) from Stanford Online [American Prophet: The Inner Life and Global Vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

Additional materials are listed here:

- Trevor Noah's [executive summary on how it all connects](#) (18 minute video)
- Maintaining professionalism in the age of Black death is a lot for [students struggling to cope](#) (read and substitute 'employees' with 'students')
- [Black Colleagues May Look Like They're Okay](#) — We are not. We are mourning before, during and after our Zoom meetings.
- [Best practices for offering allyship to black colleagues/employees](#)
- [10 Books About Race You Should Be Reading](#)
- [Confronting White Supremacy](#) — Educational resource sheet compiled by instructors to discuss and dismantle white supremacy in the classroom
- [Anti-racism Resources for White People](#) — Resource guide compiled by Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein, for white people to deepen their anti-racist work
- [Calling 911 Means Different Things To White And Black People](#)
- [Alternatives to Calling the Police and Police an Justice Reforms](#)
- [Your Kids Aren't Too Young to Talk About Race](#) — Comprehensive resource
- Rachel Cargle's [Racial Justice Research Document](#) is a heartbreaking survey of select cases of police brutality and murder in the United States
- A toolkit to help foster productive conversations about race and civil disobedience <https://bit.ly/3gJrfLL>
- Daily anti-racism work for June (broken down by time commitment) [bit.ly/junejustice](https://bit.ly/junejustice)
- [Anti-Racist Resource Guide](#)
- The Stanford Biomedical Association for the Interest of Minority Students ([BioAIMS](#)) has created an [allyship toolkit](#)

- The Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Graduate Teaching Consultants for the VPUE Teach-In has created an [Anti-Racist Audible Syllabus](#) with a Spotify playlist paired with critical readings on each chapter
- Explore [Confronting Racism at Work: A Reading List](#) by Harvard Business Review

## Honor emotions:

Noticing student and postdoc emotional states without judgment is important to their emotional and psychological flourishing. How you can do this:

- [Here's What to Do & Say To Boost Student Psychological Safety](#) — Scroll to #2 for actual language you can use
- Normalize the fear, stress, anxiety, and distraction felt during this time. One way to accomplish this is to lead with vulnerability, sharing your feelings with empathy and compassion to open space for students to share
- [Red Folder Spring 2020 | Vaden Health Services](#) - Guidance for faculty & staff supporting student well-being in a virtual campus environment
- Familiarize yourself with [signs of student distress and steps you can take to help](#) — These responses were designed in response to COVID-19 and can certainly be adapted for supporting students experiencing a gradient of distress caused by physical distancing
- During Zoom chats and check-ins, invite students to add mood imagery or contribute 1-3 words in the Zoom chat or a Canvas discussion on how they are feeling. Ask them to upload an emoji, photo or meme that captures their current emotional state
- Encourage students to practice self-care and wellness by contributing ideas and images via [Padlet](#) (enable moderator feature)
- Open, close meetings by explicitly asking students to reflect on and share something they are grateful for, or something that has brought them joy recently, or have students contribute these thoughts to a shared Padlet or Canvas page
- Not sure what to say? Visit the [AestheticsOfJoy.com](#) to browse useful resources to joyfully *start* conversations and joyfully *change* the subject
- If you don't know what to say, it is ok to acknowledge that fact
- Angeline Dukes @FutureDrDukes offers simple, meaningful steps that faculty can take to demonstrate support for students, click here for her [Twitter thread for PIs on supporting Black students](#)

## Engage with community:

More than ever, we need everyone to shine their gifts towards humanity and ACTIVATE to do at least one thing to ensure *justice for all*. We also need to avoid causing harm:

- **Do not emotionally hijack people. Seek consent before jumping into any racially-charged or potentially emotional conversation.**
  - Ask if the person you want to dialogue with is in the right space to talk about *X-topic* and accept that their response may be no. Respond with compassion either way

- Follow this advice from [Awaken](#) CEO and Co-Founder, Michelle Kim — *'Please do not go to your Black friends to process your feelings right now. Ask your own community to hold space for you if you need to cry, scream, reflect, ask questions, process your anger, sadness, exhaustion. Therapy is a safe and consensual space for this.'*
- Before attempting to engage in an ally conversation, explore this article with [six suggestions for doing the work to educate yourself](#)
- [75 Things You Can Do for Racial Justice](#)
- [Therapist-Approved Tips For Talking To Your Partner About Race](#)
- [How to Build Spaces That Foster Connection](#)
- [Allyship is an active practice that requires action](#) — The Who, What, and How of being an ally for social justice
- Do not expect a reply to that email or text that you sent to your Black friend or colleague.
  - Silence in this context is not personal, it's self-preservation. We are mourning. We may not have the words or energy, oscillating between exhausted and enraged

## Take financial action:

Donate to organizations that are doing the work to change policies and protect the people and families devastated by systemic racism and police brutality.

- [SecretLA -How To Take Action And Support The Black Lives Matter Movement](#)
- [Rolling Stone - Here's where you can Donate](#)
- [Variety - Organizations bailing out protestors](#)

## Take care of yourself:

The risk of burnout is higher for those in 'helping professions' such as teaching and direct-student services. Looking after yourself both restoratively and proactively is the best way to remain effective for our students. How you can do this:

- Be mindful of [resilience fatigue](#) and give yourself permission to contribute when you have the capacity and energy to do so
- Develop a [personalized menu of self-care strategies](#) to promote your own flourishing in [the five main domains](#)
- Utilize [Stanford wellness resources](#) to maintain your well-being
- Regularly solicit input from close friends and family on how you appear to be doing
- [Get support](#) from trained professionals

## Hear the voices of your students

### ***I can't anymore Stanford***

**Written 6/2/20 by a Black Biosciences PhD student**

I can't walk around med campus without being confused for another black student with long hair on a regular basis

I can't walk on the same side of the street as a white person without them crossing to the other side

I can't take the marguerite shuttle without having all people avoid sitting next to me

I can't go to my program retreat without having a classmate remind me of how my blackness might be perceived by wearing a hoodie

I can't move out of campus housing without having other people look at me as though I'm robbing an apartment

I can't enter a university building without the door being closed in my face and a white colleague demanding to see my badge open up access to the building

I can't walk through the campus late at night without fear that someone will call campus police on me

I can't listen to another privileged student/staff/faculty member say "You're different than the other ones"

I can't fix my bike on campus without having people stare at me as though I'm trying to steal my own bike

I can't go on a walk to Ray's without wearing my Stanford hoodie to show that I belong on campus

I can't take having to hear about hate crimes being reported on campus and administration doing nothing but "condemn" the action but not fix the underlying problem

I can't be responsible for educating a race of people on why their whiteness and privilege hurts me when they do not want to learn

I can't hear how a university with a \$27 billion dollar endowment can't figure out how to make me feel like a human being on campus

I can't deal with your excuses anymore Stanford, I can't read your copy paste email that replaces the name of the black person who has been gunned down by a system which you helped to create and continue to prop up, I can't yell at you any louder about how I've felt for the last few years on this campus. I can't be responsible for fixing an academic culture where people of color don't belong.

## Provost's guidance on academic accommodations

[Message from the Provost to School Deans](#) from June 2, 2020

Overview:

- Extend empathy and understanding to those who are finding the current moment difficult. If you are aware of a student in distress, please remember that there is a broad network of support services available in our community, as well as in your local Dean's office.

- Be transparent around grading, so that students who simply aren't in a position to focus on academic work know what they still need to do to pass.
- Offer other accommodations if your class pedagogy and structure permit. Remember that these accommodations must be available to all students in the class. Not all students will feel comfortable asking for consideration, and there are issues of fairness.
- For some students, their best option may be to request an Incomplete from you for the course (you should not give an incomplete without a request). Incompletes should not be used when a student has requested to graduate this quarter.

## Provide support in your lab

- **You are responsible to say something**
- [Actions You Can Take](#) to cultivate personal and societal change by turning thought and care into action + [Learning Resources](#) (Cardinal at Work)
- [The Creative Collective NYC tweeted](#) out a helpful thread of questions that aren't "How are you?" that you can pose to your Black friends and colleagues if they choose to open up a dialogue - Great list of questions to use via Zoom and in-person
- Angeline Dukes (@FutureDrDukes) offers simple, meaningful steps that faculty can take to demonstrate support for students, click here for her [Twitter thread for PIs on supporting Black students](#)
- Offer to contact the department leadership of rotating students, qualifying exam committee/department dissertation committee on the student's behalf to postpone imminent deadlines
- When you reach out by email, let the students know what the conversation will cover (so they are not caught off guard).
- *Here is some language you can use to respond to your students:*
  - **To all of your students and trainees** - "I recognize that our country's social unrest may be affecting you in many ways, and I am willing to offer flexibility with XXXX, as long as the XXXXX are completed before XXX. Please reach out to me via email if you would like an extension on your XXX. Please know that there are resources available to support you. You can reach out to the Office of Graduate Education (OGE) at [oge-helpme@stanford.edu](mailto:oge-helpme@stanford.edu) for more information about these resources."
- During the meeting, check in individually with trainees about how they are doing; offer an opportunity to adjust and reprioritize research goals
  - Understand each person may be coping differently
  - **List of conversations to have with your trainees:**
    - Ask for consent to discuss national events verbally and by email: "Do you have the emotional capacity to discuss national events, such as police brutality, systemic racism, the pandemic? I am talking with everyone about these issues and how it impacts their ability to do research. Please know that responding with 'No' or 'Not now' is a perfectly acceptable choice."
      - Not everyone is ready or wants to have this conversation, so be sure to encourage trainees to respond honestly
      - Do not judge their honest response

- Ask your students and trainees what they need, but be willing to suggest tangible research-related topics to guide the conversation. **Students and trainees may not know how to articulate what their needs are.**
  - Ask what they are doing to take care of themselves
  - Ask what support they need with experiments or projects so they can focus on their mental health (they may be afraid to ask)
  - Ask if they would feel comfortable if you have a discussion about the topic in a group meeting
- Provide space for trainees to ask you questions
- Additional conversation guides - [guide1](#), [guide2](#)
- Manage group dynamics - where we are as a team; having and holding space to engage
  - Create a trusting environment to engage in difficult conversations by having one speaker at a time
  - Devote 10 minutes of scheduled lab event - acknowledge events; do we want to have a separate space outside of lab meeting
  - Offer to have a journal club with reading focused on a topic related to bias and microaggressions
- Create and communicate a follow-up plan with your group
  - Discuss what next steps there will be for the group going forward in this space

## Need help getting started?

Need support with crafting an email or starting a conversation that acknowledges what's happening? OGE is here to support you with scripts and language that underscore empathy and compassion. Use this document to [contribute to and source examples of how colleagues are communicating with students](#). Take what works, put it in your voice and then communicate that you are aware and that you care.

We are here to support you. Please [reach out](#) if you have any questions or suggestions on how OGE can better support you and our Biosciences graduate students.

Other resources:

- Kevin Moody, School of Medicine Associate Dean for Human Resources, [kevin.moody@stanford.edu](mailto:kevin.moody@stanford.edu)