

Dear UC Berkeley Physics Faculty and Administration,

In the wake of several brutal murders of Black individuals by police, [Particles for Justice](#) called for a #Strike4BlackLives on June 10, 2020. We Physics graduate students joined the strike to begin addressing the systemic racism that has existed in the UC Berkeley Department of Physics since its inception. For far too long, people of color – in particular, Black and Indigenous people of color – have had to bear the burden of participating in a system that is deeply biased against them. Racial inequities exist both in academia at large and here in our department, and we must take immediate steps to address them.

During the teach-ins, town halls, and painfully illuminative discussions that occurred as part of the strike, the graduate student community identified aspects of our department's structure and culture that actively harm underrepresented students of color. Two committees of graduate students – one with department-wide representation and one consisting of students of color – drew on published research (in particular, the American Institute of Physics' [TEAM-UP report](#)) as well as their own lived experiences to create a list of action items for department leadership. Our full action plan can be found [here](#).

With the counsel of the students of color committee, we have selected from the action plan the following 12 most urgent items, which we demand the department address within the indicated time frames or as soon as possible. These action items are given below in order of priority:

**1. By the end of Fall 2020, procure a plan that will financially provide research funding for all undergraduates who identify as underrepresented minorities (URM) by the end of Spring 2023.** The fact that the vast majority of undergraduate research in the Physics Department is unpaid is a major burden for URM students who do not have the economic privilege to pursue unpaid research. In short, **if you want URM undergraduates to stay in the department, pay them to do research.**

**2. Commit to recruiting URM faculty and students to the department:**

- Make a financial commitment to the recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students of color through diverse actions, for example:
  - Offering travel grants for students and postdocs of color to give research seminars and meet with prospective graduate school applicants at diverse institutions, e.g. CSUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and local community colleges.
  - Flying or busing in prospective URM students for an overnight program, similar to UC Santa Cruz's [Student-Initiated Outreach for Admitted Students](#) recruitment programs.
  - Offering grants for sending URM students to conferences that support their academic and career success, such as the annual conference of the National Society of Black Physicists.

- Make a financial commitment to the recruitment of faculty of color, for example:
  - Developing a funding plan that, within the next five years, will facilitate the hiring of multiple URM (and in particular, Black) tenure-track faculty and will conduct a broad faculty search across all subfields, which should be aggressively advertised in diverse arenas, e.g. organizations such as NBSP.

**3.** Actively support and advertise for the Compass Project as the flagship program for mentorship and community-building among URM in the Department of Physics.

- The Compass Project mission statement is currently being updated to make its first and foremost priority the community betterment of URM, and in particular Black and Indigenous people of color.

**4.** Provide \$1,000 of departmental funding per month and active advertisement for monthly POC-specific programming (e.g. dinners and retreats) from the Fall 2020 semester onward.

**5.** Before the Fall 2020 semester, assess and communicate progress towards the recommendations of this letter and its accompanying [action plan](#), as well as the goals laid out in the [2016 Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Strategic Plan](#).

- The review of the Strategic Plan should be completed every two years in a subsequent report circulated to faculty, staff, postdocs, students, and other stakeholders.

**6.** Compile a classification list of racially insensitive and/or potentially discriminatory behavior, ranging from microaggressions to Title VI / Title IX offenses, along with their respective concrete repercussions. In addition, confirmed offenses of this list's items should be taken into consideration for professors' promotions, raises, and tenure.

- Before August 1, 2020, hold a meeting with undergraduate and graduate students present to discuss the establishment of a system for reporting transgressions on the classification list (e.g. a potentially anonymous grievance box specifically for reporting microaggressions or inappropriate comments).
- Commit to making the results of investigations transparent to all physics faculty members.
- Appoint a specific Person-of-Contact to manage communications, investigations, and repercussions pertaining to complaints.

**7.** Include a comprehensive and up-to-date list of resources for URM students on the Berkeley Physics website by the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester. Lack of accessibility of information, especially concerning resources for URM students, is a significant obstacle to URM students' success. The list should include, but should not be limited to:

- A list of fellowships available for undergraduate students.
- A list of funding sources for undergraduate research.
- A list of REUs for URM.
- Examples of successful applications to the aforementioned programs.

- Different organizations and communities advocating for URM in physics and/or STEM fields.
- A formal process for undergrads to apply for research in the department.

**8.** Commit to uplifting physicists of color within our department and the greater academic community:

- Highlight accomplishments of scholars of color within Physics, e.g. at the first tea each academic year, in the department newsletter, and as a hallway display on the first floor of each of the physics buildings.
- Invite Black speakers to give Berkeley Physics lectures and colloquia (including the 290 series, Oppenheimer lecture, etc.), including but not limited to speakers from HBCUs.

**9.** By August 2021, create mandatory anti-racist trainings and workshops for faculty, staff and students, e.g. by consulting with the [Centers for Educational Justice and Student Engagement](#); attending [this upcoming APS equity and inclusion webinar \(June 24th\)](#); and reading [Wheaton College's guide to Becoming an Anti-Racist Educator](#).

**10.** Compose a formal statement addressed to the Chancellor advocating for the disarmament and demilitarization of UCPD and BPD by August 1, 2020.

**11.** With undergraduate and graduate student input, create a required intersectional justice, ethics, and history course for majors and graduate students in the department no later than Fall 2022.

**12.** Before August 1, 2020, hold a department meeting which is **mandatory for all faculty**, and open to staff, postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students, to **discuss the contents of the [TEAM-UP](#) report, as well as the implementation of the demands in this letter and the accompanying full [action plan](#)**.

Every member of our department, from undergraduate to Chair, is responsible for actively working towards the dismantlement of systemic racism and anti-Blackness in academia. This document, as well as the full action plan, focuses on the action items that must be initiated by the leadership of our department. We, the undersigned, look forward to working with the department for each step of this long-overdue process, the importance of which cannot be overstated. We thank you for reading this letter and for beginning this conversation with us.

Signed,

*Foregrounding the contributions of the students of color committee, and then followed by other community members in alphabetical order:*

Jessica Avva (Graduate student)

Milo Buitrago-Casas (Graduate student)

Jeske Dioquino (Graduate student)  
Cesar Gonzalez Renteria (Graduate student)  
Nicole Greene (Graduate student)  
Shannon Haley (Graduate student)  
Donez Horton-Bailey (Graduate student)  
Aashrita Mangu (Graduate student)  
Madeline Monroy (Graduate student)  
Vikram Nagarajan (Graduate student)  
Andrés Franco Valiente (Graduate student)  
Tianrui Xu (Graduate student)  
Victoria Xu (Graduate student)  
Adrianne Zhong (Graduate student)

Caytyn Abono (Undergraduate student)  
David Abramovitch (Undergraduate student)  
Tylor Adkins (Graduate student)  
Isabel Aguilar (Undergraduate student)  
Burhan Ahmed (Graduate student)  
Kamphol Akkaravarawong (Graduate student)  
Alberto Alonso (Postdoc)  
Sulaiman Alvi (Undergraduate student)  
Jeremy Axelrod (Graduate student)  
Samuel Badman (Graduate student)  
Raphael Baer-Way (Undergraduate student)  
Vamshi Balanaga (Undergraduate student)  
Ella Banyas (Graduate student)  
Jacqueline Beechert (Graduate student)  
Maya Berlin-Udi (Graduate student)  
Madeline Bernstein (Graduate student)  
Prabudhya Bhattacharyya (Graduate student)  
Andreas Biekert (Graduate student)  
Marcus Bintz (Graduate student)  
Charles Brown (Postdoc)  
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Taylor Cookmeyer (Graduate student)  
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Kayla Currier (Graduate student)  
Nicholas Dale (Graduate student)  
Mario D'Andrea (Graduate student)  
Stefan Divic (Graduate student)  
Sam Dixon (Graduate student)

Elizabeth Donoway (Graduate student)  
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James Egelhoff (Graduate student)  
Daniel Eilbott (Graduate student)  
Scott Eustice (Graduate student)  
Benjamin Foster (Graduate student)  
Stephen Gant (Graduate student)  
Daniel Gardeazabal (Graduate student)  
Claire Gasque (Graduate student)  
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Hannah Klion (Graduate student)  
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Kush Maheshwari (Undergraduate Student)  
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Ravi Naik (Postdoc)  
Nathan Ng (Graduate student)  
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Gabriel Perko-Engel (Undergraduate student)  
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Alejandro Pelcastre (Undergraduate student)  
Emma Regan (Graduate student)  
Neal Reynolds (Postdoc)  
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Josue Rodriguez (Graduate Student)  
Roger Roglans (Graduate student)  
Zachary Ross (Undergraduate Student)  
Ben Saarel (Graduate student)  
Noah Sailer (Graduate student)  
Michael Santos (Undergraduate student)  
Sai Neha Santpur (Graduate student)  
Thomas Schuster (Graduate student)  
Chirag Sharma (Undergraduate student)  
Jamie Simon (Graduate student)  
Ashwin Singh (Graduate student)  
Karthik Siva (Graduate student)  
Max Smiley (Graduate student)  
Conrad Stansbury (Graduate student)  
Vincent Su (Graduate Student)  
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Vetri Velan (Graduate student)  
Kenneth Vetter (Graduate student)  
Hannah Weaver (Graduate student)  
Junwen Xiong (Graduate student)  
Winston Yin (Graduate student)  
Alexander Zibrov (Postdoc)  
Charlie Snell (Undergraduate student)

*Signatures of Department of Physics Faculty and Staff, in solidarity:*

James Analytis (Faculty)

Carlos Bustamante (Staff)

Kathleen Cooney (Staff)

Barbara Jacak (Professor)

Brett Laugtug (Staff)

Simon Leaver-Appelman (Staff)

Kathy Lee (Staff)

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Elizabeth Nakahama (Staff)

Donna Sakima (Staff)

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