

## **Black Lives Matter. A Commitment to Action from UCI ESS Faculty and Graduate Student Leaders**

Dear ESS family,

In collaboration with grad students and faculty, we send our strong statement of solidarity and long-term commitment to ending anti-Black racism. This commitment is a starting point meant to initialize a continued dialogue and, through our actions, to move the ESS department in a direction of anti-racism. We intend this letter to be revised as we learn and hear more of the voices and needs of the community served by ESS.

**First of all, where we stand:** Black Lives Matter. We are heartbroken and outraged by the continued anti-Black racism and police brutality in this country, including in our local area. We recognize that many of us continue to benefit from white privilege, while other members of our ESS community have faced discrimination, microaggressions, overt racism, and police brutality to an extent that many of us cannot fully understand. We acknowledge that the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery were not isolated instances; that the officers responsible are not anomalies within an otherwise functioning law enforcement system, and we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement against these injustices. Lastly, we acknowledge that systemic racism and implicit biases are pervasive in academia, and we recognize our responsibility to change that system.

### **Second, what we are committing to:**

- We are committed to amplifying Black voices in science. These actions can include ESS seminars, curricula, social media, and department events. We will increase our seminar invitations to Black scientists. We will make efforts to recognize more Black researchers in our undergraduate and graduate courses. We will expand our curriculum and encourage discussion of relevant environmental and climate justice issues during our courses and seminars. We will regularly feature Black scientists and their research on our website, on social media, and in other venues.
- We are committing to increasing efforts to recruit and retain Black students, researchers, and faculty. We remain committed to our mission of creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive community within the ESS department at all levels. We have ongoing efforts, yet we acknowledge that we still have a long way to go. Black scholars remain underrepresented among the ESS faculty and student population, as well as in the broader geoscience community. We commit to increasing efforts to recruit and support Black students, including through our participation in programs such as the AGU Bridge Program and the UC-HBCU Initiative, through outreach to underserved K-12 schools, community colleges, and minority serving institutions, and through mentorship programs and UCI programs such as DECADE. We will work to ensure that everyone within ESS can receive training in implicit bias and mentoring. We will continually monitor and seek to improve our graduate admission and faculty hiring processes to follow best practices based on diversity and equity research.

### **Third, we acknowledge the intersectionality of Blackness with other aspects of identity.**

The above stances and commitments shall be broadened where relevant to other underrepresented minorities (URMs) and people of color in STEM.

- For seminars, we will aim for at least one seminar per quarter to focus on community engagement in addition to science.
- For social media and scientific events, we will feature URM scientists and celebrate specific communities especially during relevant times such as Black History Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, Women's History Month, LGBTQ+ Pride Month, etc.
- For our undergraduate and graduate curricula, we encourage instructors to incorporate elements of anti-racism into each course where relevant to the scientific material, including perspectives from impacted communities, discussion of inequities, and texts/media from minority voices. In the coming months, we will compile relevant articles, case studies, and teaching materials that can be utilized by ESS instructors.
- In addition, we encourage everyone to evaluate how their research impacts disenfranchised communities, incorporates aspects of environmental and climate justice, and engages with affected community members in the process of research.
- In Fall 2020, we will teach a graduate seminar course (ESS 280A) dedicated to diversity and inclusion in STEM. One goal of this course will be to develop a draft code of principles for anti-racist teaching, research, and community engagement in ESS.
- Above all, we commit to listening to and learning from our community, including undergraduate and graduate students, researchers, faculty, and staff.

**Fourth, we want to share the resources and reporting structures** available to anyone who experiences racism or other forms of discrimination on campus. The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity has [reporting information](#), including an anonymous option. Other resources include [CARE](#) and [DECADE](#), as well as faculty and staff in ESS if you are comfortable:

- Kathleen Johnson, Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Isabella Velicogna, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Equity, and Inclusion
- Kate Mackey, DECADE faculty mentor
- Melanie Nakanishi, Student Affairs Manager
- Eric Rignot, Chair

Finally, support groups and other resources are available through the [UCI Center for Black Cultures, Resources, and Research](#).

**Fifth, we recognize that individuals within our community may want to take additional actions. Here are some [ideas and resources](#):**

- Support and donate to organizations fighting anti-Black racism.
- Educate ourselves, our families, and our friends: Listen, read, learn, advocate for change, apologize when we make mistakes, repeat.
- Think carefully about how we seek police aid in our daily lives, acknowledging the potential to endanger Black people and other POC.
- Show up. As of this message, peaceful demonstrations are occurring in most cities daily, including in Irvine.
- Diversify our social media feeds; follow and share Black voices.
- Speak out and write to decision-makers about systemic injustice; support science-based policies to combat police brutality; demand police accountability, including for the UCIPD.
- Educate ourselves about diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence; root out anti-Black racism, injustice, and barriers that are pervasive within academia, including at UC Irvine.

- Vote in local, state, and federal elections.

Signed,

Kathleen R. Johnson,  
Associate Professor and Vice-Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Eric Rignot,  
Chair, Donald Bren and Chancellor's Professor of Earth System Science, and NAS Member

Isabella Velicogna,  
Professor and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Equity, and Inclusion

Mathieu Morlighem,  
Associate Professor and Vice-Chair of Undergraduate Studies

Jin-Yi Yu,  
Professor and Vice-Chair of Graduate Studies

Steven Allison,  
Professor of ESS and EEB, Director of Ridge to Reef Graduate Training Program

James Randerson,  
Ralph J. and Carol M. Cicerone Professor and NAS Member

Katherine Mackey,  
Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor and DECADE Faculty Mentor

Shane Coffield and Shivani Ehrenfeucht,  
PhD Candidates and DECADE student representatives

Robert Fofrich, Audrey Odwuor, and Nicola Wiseman,  
PhD Candidates/Students and Graduate Student Representatives

Julie Ferguson,  
Associate Teaching Professor

Elizabeth Crook,  
Assistant Teaching Professor

Michael Pritchard,  
Associate Professor

Saewung Kim,  
Associate Professor

Charlie Zender,

Professor

Eric Saltzman,  
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Ellen Druffel,  
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