

Dear [REDACTED],

We have met just a few times under rather precarious circumstances, but what is more concerning is your gross mismanagement of our interactions regarding my experiences of racial and gender-based harassment. I am the only Black woman in the [REDACTED] Ph.D. program, and I am now the only woman in my Ph.D. cohort.

[REDACTED] has left the department as a result of her overwhelming distrust in your handling of harassment in our department. Many students do not feel safe given the climate of the department and the university. I have considered switching departments throughout my time at UCLA. It has been suggested to me multiple times by school administrators, faculty, and staff that I formally make the switch to protect myself from experiencing further damage. When I came to other IoES faculty members and staff about my issues of harassment in the department, they were supportive and tried to guide me towards helpful resources. Protecting us from at least institutional harm is part of your responsibility in your role as the Director of [REDACTED].

How dare you send a letter of solidarity with BLM to your donors and students to express your standings? Your letter is disingenuous to the way that you are running the institute and is performative. How dare you share your letter to the IoES listserv and social media accounts before attempting to acknowledge your racist comments toward me?

You have made multiple remarks that describe tokenism and enact racial violence with what you have said. In late October 2019, I came to you to discuss an instance of harassment in our department. During that conversation, I was very clearly reminded of my status as a ploy for diversity. You stated that having another Black student in your department is “no different than me being here.” I was shocked that you had the audacity to shift our conversation to be about my race rather than discussing the tense circumstances under which I requested our meeting.

Your comment was doubly unnerving because your words bolstered my previous misgivings about being the only Black student in the incoming cohort. Upon my admission, I recall that another highly qualified Black applicant was waitlisted during the 2020 cycle. Instead of celebrating with this person, we met on our first day of the [REDACTED] Program at [REDACTED]. We awkwardly introduced ourselves to realize that my position in the program could have just as easily been theirs. This does not happen to white students. It made me feel expendable before even beginning classes on campus. Despite that this fellow Black student requested to transfer into the program with financial and faculty support, you have not allowed it—leaving me isolated.

How am I supposed to look another human being in the face and know that we are different people, but our identities are the same in your eyes?

On January 30th, your comment about myself and another Black student being diversity admits to [REDACTED] was brought to your attention by a fellow faculty member. Despite that you indicated to this faculty member that you would issue a formal apology, your words were hollow as I never received an apology

from you. You have been silent. Your apathy toward me is prideful. If you offered me an apology today, your words would be deemed empty.

I feel invisible in the [REDACTED] department and I avoid going there. When multiple professors asked to relocate our meeting room for the Issues and Methods class to help prevent the unease that other students and I were feeling in the department, you ignored the request. I spent the winter quarter in the glass conference room next to your office. Although I bumped into you multiple times over those few months, you did not even afford me with an acknowledgment of my existence with a simple hello.

I have received your silence as an affirmation that you are sorry that I was offended, but you are not sorry that you offended me.

I find it appalling that you were afforded multiple opportunities to mend an interpersonal relationship with the only Black student in your Ph.D. program. You refused to do so to protect your pride. I am exhausted from my experiences of isolation, given the climate for race and gender while navigating the opaque power structures of the department. Instead of supporting me as a part of this program, you have made it extremely difficult for me to be productive in my studies because of your disturbingly glib leadership.

I Do not want an empty apology. I want you to:

- 1. Support the immediate diversification of the graduate student body. Including providing the option to transfer in Black and URM students who have applied to [REDACTED] with funding and admitting Black and URM prospective students with funding.**
- 2. Get written input and approval from a committee of students and faculty from under-represented groups before sending messages, organizing, or fundraising on racial justice issues on behalf of the Institute.**
- 3. Stop tokenism and the exploitation of race for fundraising, communication, and photo opportunities.**

[REDACTED], what are you going to do?

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED] of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability,

We are upset, enraged, and exhausted from all that we've seen in the past two weeks. Black students at UCLA are experiencing the collective trauma of the inequalities of COVID, the economic crash, and the state of police brutality— some of these students are under your purview. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and so many more at the hand of police brutality are inexcusable. These murders represent the centuries of racism and colonialism that perpetuate violence and stark inequities in our society.

The mission statement of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability is to “move science to action on the front lines of environmental progress.” Yet any attempt at environmental progress without first addressing the systemic oppression and inequities that are so deeply rooted in our society will not bring about long-lasting change. Academia has a responsibility to address these issues. The Institute prides itself in extending our research to benefit communities outside of the ivory tower -- an endeavor that cannot be fulfilled until we strive fully to understand and address the issues that the communities we work with face. However, if we do not fully understand or address the issues the communities we work with face, we are doing them an extreme disservice and actively contributing to their oppression. We are past the point of hoping for and talking about change; we must take action now.

We are strong in our conviction that Black Lives Matter. We received the IoES's statement on the above. We, too, offer our solidarity in the current movement and denounce racism in any form, but words are simply not enough. We are frustrated that it took many days and a student email before the IoES addressed the trauma that has been produced during the past two weeks. The lack of accountability and reliable leadership from the Institute as a whole is not something new. Students have expressed the Institute's lack of reliability in research and class settings, demonstrating that this is not an isolated instance but a part of a pattern. [REDACTED] letter, which was sent June 8th, demonstrates how harmful this lack of accountability and reliability can truly be, and we stress our support for her powerful letter. These actions, or rather lack thereof, have been attributed to being busy and having too many things on your plate. This is a poor excuse in any setting, especially pertaining to the safety and active violence against students in the Institute.

We are angry and frustrated by the lack of diversity and racial climate of IoES. We are concerned about the low morale, the program losing a fellow graduate student, the potential loss of more, and the repeated rejection of highly qualified Black and underrepresented minority prospective students from our program. Among the sea of solidarity messaging published in recent days have been numerous statements from various members of the UCLA leadership. This talk may have good intent, but words are not actions. We believe that the IoES can and must do better.

We ask that you immediately address the following points in order for IoES to be a department we want to remain a part of:

- 1. Support the immediate diversification of the graduate student body. Including providing the option to transfer in Black and URM students who have applied to IoES with funding and admitting Black and URM prospective students with funding.**
- 2. Get written input and approval from a committee of students and faculty from under-represented groups before sending messages, organizing, or fundraising on racial justice issues on behalf of the Institute.**
- 3. Stop tokenism and the exploitation of race for fundraising, communication, and photo opportunities.**
4. Communicate solidarity and anti-racism messages first to undergraduates, graduate students, staff, faculty, and alumni prior to sharing messages to the public or to donors.
5. Add Black and Native members to the IoES advisory board.
6. Make a statement demanding that UCLA divest from the UC Police Department, both in practice and with regards to funding, have leadership of IoES join the newly-formed UCLA police divestment task force, and create an explicit IoES safety and accountability policy that does not involve the UCP in any capacity.
7. Include anti-racism and environmental justice texts and discussions as a required component of the undergraduate and graduate course curriculum (for example, Issues and Methods).
8. Make public departmental ties with all outside organizations, all sources and amounts of funding received by the Institute, and partner and donor commitments to equity, inclusion and diversity, for transparency.
9. Mandate that faculty and staff and students participate in workshops that focus on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity and anti-racism minimally once a year, with those in leadership roles participating in additional training commensurate with their degree of responsibility.
10. Improve racial diversity at all levels without alienating Black and Brown students when they are admitted to IoES.

We also ask for specific commitments to:

1. Conduct an external review of the racial climate in IoES this summer, with actionable findings.
2. Use of our social media presence, alumni network, and email listservs to amplify Black voices that highlight and address inequities.

3. Prioritize the use of Institute, university, board, and donor funding and resources to diversify IoES leadership by hiring Black faculty.
4. Raise funds for fellowships specifically designated for Black students and postdoctoral researchers.
5. Support and encourage equity, inclusion and diversity-focused research and activities, including through the Environmental Justice Working Group and the Center for Diverse Leadership in Science.
6. Create an external oversight commission to develop and adopt an Anti-Racism-In-All-Policies approach that governs the full spectrum of investment, recruitment, hiring, and other decisions made at the IoES
7. Support Black businesses, including using Black food vendors.
8. Make public the graduation rate and time to degree for all students broken down by demographics.
9. Push for change and justice at the division and university level.

As signatories to this letter, we acknowledge that we find ourselves in a dynamic and quickly-changing situation. We acknowledge that we have each been impacted in different ways, and that, even with open dialogue, we cannot each fully know another's experience with the racial climate. We nevertheless offer this collection of thoughts, reflections, and demands as a group of students who believe that communication, transparency, action, accountability, commitment, and tenacity can and will bring about sorely needed shifts toward justice.

The Institute of the Environment and Sustainability serves as a model for interdisciplinary research and is an entity that is looked to by other scientific and environmental institutions. Currently it represents a model that perpetuates racism and therefore we must make addressing inequity a priority. By doing so, we can serve as a model for others. As graduate students, we acknowledge that action is going to require a joint effort from the Director, board, faculty, staff, and students and we are committed to doing our part. Now we ask that you commit to doing yours.

Signed,

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

3rd Year D.Env Candidate

[REDACTED]

4th Year D.Env Candidate

[REDACTED]

3rd Year D.Env Candidate

[REDACTED]

5th Year D.Env Candidate

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

Former 4th Year D.Env Candidate

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year Ph.D. Student

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

2nd Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year D.Env Student

[REDACTED]

Former 1st Year Ph.D. Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year D.Env Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year Ph.D Student

[REDACTED]

1st Year D.Env Student