

June 3, 2020

**Black Law Students Association at UC Irvine School of Law  
Statement Condemning Police Brutality, White Supremacy, and the Long History of  
Injustice towards Black People and Black Law Students**

Dear UCI Law Community:

2020 has been a very difficult year and “difficult” does not even do it justice. The past two weeks have further illustrated what many Black people, and some others, already know – white supremacy is the greatest disease afflicting this country--even through a global pandemic. History repeats itself as Americans continue to witness the devastating killings of Black people at the hands of police and white supremacists. Ahmaud Arbery (Georgia). Breonna Taylor (Kentucky). Sean Reed (Indiana). Steven Taylor (California). Tony McDade (Florida). And most recently (that we are aware of), George Floyd (Minnesota). In February 2020, we even witnessed police brutality here at UC Irvine, with UCIPD’s inexcusable aggressive force on a Black UCI alumna. Regardless of gender, sex, orientation, age, or qualification, no black body is safe from violence.

Your Black classmates, students, and colleagues are TIRED. We are tired of the disregard for Black life in this country. We are tired of people appropriating our culture, wanting to be “down” with us, and freely using the N-word, yet failing to raise their voices against systemic Black oppression. We are tired of constantly fearing for the lives of our loved ones. We are tired of stressing over how race impacts otherwise-normal events: seeking equal medical treatment, shopping in a store, interviewing for jobs, jogging. We are tired of people expecting us to bear the burden of educating our non-Black counterparts on the history of American racism.

We, your fellow classmates and students, are tired of the UCI Black law student experience often being overlooked. Most of us have to work twice as hard in the classroom, yet still wonder whether our voices are truly heard or invited in academic spaces or study groups. If we are bold enough to speak up in class about Black issues, we make our peers “uncomfortable.” When we collectively gather in the courtyard, we are perceived as “intimidating” and reported to administration. In the job search process, we are not given adequate counseling from CDO because our legal career interests are too niche. We are forced to code-switch to “fit into” a legal profession that ignores Black people and uses the Bar Exam in an attempt to exclude us. We are underrepresented in faculty and staff, and the school has yet to prioritize increasing the number of Black admitted students. Sadly, we are not the only Black law students struggling, many other law students share the same sentiments at law schools around the country.

We implore you all to remember that every day you have the luxury of waking up and not seeing a video of someone that resembles you being choked to death. You have the luxury of not having “the talk” with your younger family members about the way this country treats Black people and how to act accordingly. You have the luxury of going into your summer job without the debilitating weight of the latest protest footage sitting on your shoulders. You have the luxury of not living in a country that was built off the backs of your people and continues to advance at the expense of your people. You have the luxury of being able to wake up every day not having to deal with these barriers, on top of COVID-19, law school, and daily life.

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Unfortunately, we know that there are many people who do not truly care about the issues and are treating #blacklivesmatter as only a hashtag, rather than a movement. Others rather remain blissfully ignorant. Most would rather not address the system that has automatically bestowed upon them benefits at birth and would rather maintain the status quo. If there is to be any change it cannot only take place when national attention draws pressure, it has to be a lifelong continued effort.

However, UCI Law has the opportunity to be different. For everyone committed to the movement to eradicate anti-Blackness: you are needed. This work cannot fall on the backs of those who anti-Blackness was created to harm. The work has to come from powerful allies and accomplices dedicated to taking affirmative actions. While there is not a simple checklist or set of rules that you can follow to absolve yourself of racism, we do encourage you to self-reflect and ask yourself what you are doing to improve your actions and hold the broader UCI Law community accountable. We challenge you to develop your independent knowledge of the white supremacist/anti-Black/anti-Indigenous fabric of this country and learn how systems of oppression operate within it. Only through recognition of the colonial mindset can we engage in efforts to decolonize. If you have yet to, take advantage of educational resources UCI Law has to offer by attending UCI Law CLEAR events, taking courses on Critical Race Theory, and attending diverse campus programming. Furthermore, we ask those of you who have yet to engage with this heavy topic to contemplate how the law itself will continue to oppress Black people until we, as lawyers, dismantle these oppressive systems and rebuild new ones.

We are exhausted but this is not a new feeling for us. The Black diaspora always finds a way to rise up and fight back. We support the protests advocating for the end of police brutality and the systemic oppression of our people. As Black law students, we are a resilient group. We hope that the current events transpiring around the country allow our message to be heard loud and clear. We hope that it triggers a lifelong commitment among UCI Law's current and future students, faculty, and staff to stand up for what is right and actively work to dismantle systems that have been designed to hinder Black America.

If you want to further assist our most vulnerable communities at this time, please see the following link and donate to nationwide bail funds: <https://bailfunds.github.io/>. Additionally, we urge you to sign [this petition](#) demanding accountability for the police violence that occurred on UCI campus on February 20th.

*Unapologetically Black,*

**BLSA Executive Board**

Jasmine Smith, Anthonya James, Sabrina Victor, & Sydney Martin  
University of California, Irvine School of Law