

June 12, 2020

Dear President Stenger,

We write to express our anger and grief at the continuing anti-Black racism in our nation and to express our solidarity with Black people on our campus, in Binghamton, and across the country and globe struggling for justice in the face of centuries of violent repression. We write to express our fierce solidarity with our Black students and colleagues as they face the ongoing trauma of disproportionate COVID-19 death rates and state-sanctioned violence against Black and Brown people -- two sides of the same coin. We write to express our grave concern for the emotional health, physical safety, and civil rights of Black students, faculty, and staff on the Binghamton campus. Fundamentally, we write in solidarity with SUNY Distinguished Professor Nkiru Nzegwu's [open letter to you dated June 12th](#), the June 9th public message from the Binghamton African Student Organization (page [1](#) and [2](#)), and the brilliant rejoinder published by the Black Student Union (BSU) in response to your initial statement of May 30th regarding the police murder of George Floyd (page [1](#) and [2](#)).

In your recent statement of June 10th, you did not redress the BSU's serious complaint. Along with the editorial board of the *Pipe Dream* in their [statement of June 11th](#), we call on you to publicly address the Black Student Union's critique that you invoked Martin Luther King, Jr. to admonish and tone-police forms of Black protest, reflecting an understanding that simplifies the complexity of the current uprisings and fails to realize the radical nature of Dr. King's critique of racism in the US. We stand with them and agree with their most [recent open letter of June 8th](#) that "your silence during this time speaks volumes and emphasizes your lack of urgency and apathetic attitude towards dismantling racism on campus, as well as your lack of respect toward Black and Brown students on campus."

In your June 10th statement, you introduce some new measures to acknowledge Black students on campus, theoretically increase access to Binghamton for some Black students, and begin a conversation about police oversight and defunding gestures. However, we remain gravely concerned, because these measures do nothing to address the pervasive racist climate on campus that has been on the rise and that students, faculty, and staff have spent years telling you about. While a Campus Citizens' Review Board may seem a good start toward deescalating our campus police force, we await specifics about what authority this Board will actually have, who will serve on it, and what forms of accountability will be in place regarding campus police. Research on incarceration has questioned the viability of these boards. There is no move toward transparency in terms of reports of misconduct--as the Governor has called for--nor a disclosure of any relationships, contractual or otherwise, that the State University Police

Department has with the Binghamton Police Department and the Broome County Sheriffs and what you plan to do about them.

We recognize the creation of the George Floyd Scholarship and the re-funding of the Clifford D. Clark Diversity Fellowship for Graduate Students on campus, although the *Pipe Dream* reported that students raised the issue of funding the Clark fellowship with you in a public meeting all the way back in [March 2013, at a Rally Against Racism](#) sponsored by 10 student groups, including the BSU, the Thurgood Marshall Pre-Law Society, and the Latin American Student Union. We also must point out that none of these new proposals directly address longstanding concerns about anti-Black violence and BU's campus climate, which we undertake in what follows.

Since your arrival in 2012, you have been duly informed about experiences of anti-Blackness, violent policing, harassment, unbelonging, exclusion, and other forms of racism on campus and in the Binghamton community. Black students, faculty, and staff, and their non-Black allies have formed various student coalitions (Confronting Racism Coordinating Committee, Students For Change, the Frances Beal Society, among others), held community discussions and talkbacks, petitioned you, filed formal complaints, documented experiences online, filled out surveys, drafted open letters and departmental statements, written articles and op-eds in *Pipe Dream*, hosted vigils, taken the knee, protested, marched, sat-in, boycotted, led teach-ins, organized Town Hall meetings, spoken out at the Faculty Senate, occupied your office and the administration building, and directly handed you formal written demands listing specific forms of redress necessary for real change for Black Students and students of color at Binghamton University. As the BSU document makes clear--and we affirm with our witness here--you have yet to hear our campus community's needs and you have failed to address the lived experiences of Black, Brown, and Asian students on campus and off. If you have heard, you haven't listened; If you have listened, you haven't acted.

The racist police murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, David McAtee, and far too many others have their roots in centuries of systemic racist repression and violence, which educational institutions all too often perpetuate and reinforce. As scholars of intersectional oppression and educators of Binghamton students, it is our responsibility to share with them the tools to understand, address, and resist the racist structures that have shaped our nation -- and academia -- so that they can imagine and create a better world. That begins with enacting ongoing visible and tangible change at Binghamton University.

The creation of the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Town Gown Advisory Board have not done nearly enough to prevent Black students from being actively marginalized on our campus, nor have they

fundamentally addressed the damning message of the [DEI's Campus Climate survey of 2014-2015](#), in which an overwhelming percentage of the Binghamton faculty--67 percent of Black males, 60 percent of Black females and 50 percent of Asian females-- administration and staff--67 percent of Black females, 50 percent of Black males, and 50 percent of Native American females--and the students-- 67 percent of Black males, 57 percent of Black females followed by 25 percent of Native American females--reported that they have experienced some form of discrimination, harassment, or incivility. A separate report from 2014-15 issued by then-Dean McCall's newly-convened [Harpur Faculty Committee for Diversity and Inclusion](#) concurred, stating that the research team "turned up significant problems that diminish Harpur's ability to recruit and retain a diverse mix of faculty and make that mix work by creating and maintaining an inclusive work environment." Such problems include women and faculty of color resigning at disproportionately high rates, related issues of underrepresentation of some racial groups in most departments, and "bullying and harassment, especially of women and faculty of color in departments."

Students and faculty have already raised the issues of selective, dangerous, and racist over-policing on and off-campus. Thirty-seven faculty members signed an [open letter in 2015](#) to you expressing grave concern for the safety of Black students on campus and the use of uniformed and undercover police during meetings with students. The issue has been raised repeatedly by students and faculty over the years, most recently in the fall of 2019 when students of color reported zero confidence in your ability to handle racist and misogynist threats made against them by members of the alt-right organization Turning Point USA. As *Pipe Dream* [reported on February 6, 2020](#) in an article entitled "'Scorched earth! Kill them! Get them!': "The Frances Beal Society said students *didn't trust UPD enough* to make official reports. 'We can also say that the threats we've been notified about were not reported to the University, UPD or [Binghamton Police Department],' the representative wrote. 'The majority of them had absolutely no faith in the University to handle these threats, especially regarding the racial aspect behind them.' University officials *could not be reached for comment.*"

Over the past 8 years, Binghamton University's leadership has repeatedly put off, downplayed, sacrificed, ignored, and silenced the expressed emotional, intellectual, and physical safety needs of Black Students and students of color. In [March 2015](#), you abruptly ended an open town hall meeting hosted by Students for Change--an organization formed in response to the police murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. When students asked for ongoing updates on progress regarding campus policing, you said, "I'm going to even consider whether I want to stay here," and you walked out. Later that week, students [occupied your office for over 5 hours](#) in order to receive an apology for this treatment; you walked out on them a second time.

When anti-Black racist drawings were found on campus in 2017, replete with references to slavery and specific racial slurs, the University allowed the idea that they were a “*social experiment*” to circulate. [Pipe Dream reported](#) “ a general consensus among attendees that the administration *didn't take the incident seriously* enough.” In April that same year, when students from the Frances Beal Society occupied the Couper Administration Building in order to protest the misallocation of University funds toward a “Blue Light system” that would significantly contribute to the continued criminalization of communities of color in Binghamton, you completely vacated the building, [leaving the students to sit alone](#). As a consortium of BU faculty wrote in an Op-Ed for the [Press and Sun-Bulletin on May 11, 2017](#): “ We are astonished by President Harvey Stenger’s absolute refusal to enter into a dialogue, a refusal he categorically restated in a statement to the university community on May 5, more than a week after the sit-in began. Instead, President Stenger has sought to delegitimize the students and their organization.”

Earlier that year, [you remained silent for three weeks following a racist incident](#) occurring off-campus during Winter Break when a White male resident of Binghamton’s westside made racist statements and verbal threats to Black women students from the BU Step Team X’Fact’r--calling them the N-word, proclaiming to be a proud Nazi and shouting he would “hang them from the trees in the backyard.” The local police did not take the students seriously and insinuated that they somehow provoked the attack. Binghamton University only acknowledged the incident and took reluctant action after repeated intervention by faculty and student organizations, including a protest march to the Administration Building and a student-organized sit-in in the hallway of the ODEI to witness the X’Fact’r team in reporting their incident because they did not trust the ODEI to take appropriate action. In fact, uniformed University Police responded to this show of support, tactically blocking two of three available exits, claiming to investigate a “noise complaint.” In the [Pipe Dream’s reportage](#) on a long, frustrating student meeting with you about this issue, they closed with this statement from Keishorea Armstrong, a senior English and Africana major who attended the student action: “‘It’s a very real concern: being afraid every time you go home, knowing that you don’t have anyone to call if anything were to happen,’ she said. ‘We can’t go to our administration, as we clearly saw today, and we can’t go to the police because they don’t care’” (5 April 2017). These are truly damning words.

As BU community members, we have endured such silencing for too long. We still hold you accountable for your statement on April 9, 2012 in which you described your administration as “committed to maintaining a thriving academic community that is inclusive, civil, non-hostile and where all persons feel valued and welcome,” and the many statements issued since that echo this language. Black, Brown, and Asian students, faculty,

administration, and staff need to feel they are safe and cared for on campus. Period. They also must know, feel--and actually experience--that Binghamton sees and values them as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), that the institution knows their unique histories, centers their lived experiences, and makes their contributions to knowledge and community life central to the university's core mission. In solidarity with the faculty signatories of the 2015 letter, we expect you to honor your many commitments to inclusion by directly addressing overt and systemic racism on campus.

We ask that you directly address anti-Black racism and what you will do about it at Binghamton. We ask that you meet with the Black Student Union, the Frances Beal Society, and other BIPOC student groups without the presence of police, to listen to their lived experiences, to take seriously their concerns, and to share publicly how you will be accountable for them. Issues students have raised with us in the past week include: 1) "explicit diversity and inclusion training for all staff, conducted by specialists with proper training, and clear consequences when those responsibilities are not met in all departments." This includes Sodexo employees.

2) "more people of color on UCC staff that can relate to and represent the diversity on campus. We need a dramatic increase in staff, administrators, and professors of color on campus." Students stressed these new hires should be in a wide variety of fields and positions, not just in the MRC or other explicit "diversity and inclusion" positions. 3) "a required curriculum on Black and Brown history and systematic oppressions" made central to a Binghamton University education, such as "mandatory classes on race and gender for all incoming freshmen and for the Masters' Teachers Program." We also charge you with revisiting and publicly addressing the demands presented by Students for Change in 2015 and the Frances Beal Society in 2017, as well as the 2014-15 campus climate reports. Black students, faculty, administration, and staff and their anti-racist allies have been telling you clearly and directly what their needs are on this campus for years. It is more than time to listen and most importantly, act in comprehensive and transformative ways.

Furthermore, Binghamton's president must work with students, faculty, and staff to change policing practices on campus and in the surrounding community. Any policing on our campus and carried out under the auspices of this university should protect and serve BIPOC students, faculty, and staff as it does their White counterparts, rather than a priori assuming BIPOC are dangerous instigators and/or outsiders to this university. We saw such police bias in stark relief this past fall during the staged provocations of Turning Point USA, an incident that needs to be reopened and the University response thoroughly reviewed, including its profound silence regarding the rapid spread of public misinformation regarding Binghamton students in the press, including President Trump's [patent lie that the counter-protesters were "radicals"](#) who "swing clubs, they swing bats, they swing everything." Your

students needed you to speak up in their defense and on their behalf, and you chose not to.

Students from BSU have expressed to this collective the need to rethink policing entirely on our campus, urging that “officers should be prohibited from having guns on campus. In addition, there needs to be more transparency between students’ experiences off-campus with BPD, as there are numerous instances of racial profiling and discrimination against Black and Brown students.” We must add that campus police racially profile and harass BIPOC faculty and staff as well. It is essential that the UPD and campus administration be educated about the history of racism within the U.S. law enforcement system as well as trained in de-escalation practices that affirm and do not antagonize BIPOC students, staff, and faculty. Students working in the BSU have also expressed to us the “demand [for] an independent organization that will investigate and reprimand officers when they have abused their roles.” We ask that you follow the example of University of Minnesota and end potential contracts with local police to redirect resources and imagination to community-based programs.

Finally, we call on you to prioritize funding for faculty hires and curriculum that give students the analytic tools to understand and resist the inequities of anti-Black racism, police violence, and the [disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown people](#). As you know, many Binghamton University students hail from communities that have been inordinately devastated by COVID-19. We call on you to ensure that despite potential economic fallout from the pandemic, resources be directed to services for Black students, for hiring and retaining Black faculty, and funding Black graduate students. We ask that you ensure that any searches remaining from [Dean Chilton’s cluster hire initiative](#)--developed specifically to increase Black faculty--that were stopped due to the COVID shut-down recommence, fully funded, in 2020-2021. Those hires must be made; and new initiatives carried out as soon as the hiring freeze lifts.

Our students, like our faculty, are thoughtful, committed, and brilliant. They are the leaders of tomorrow and they need the tools to reshape their world so that they can breathe, live, and thrive on -- and off -- our campus. We will not rest until Black members of the University community know, experience, and truly *feel* their expressed needs are met by the policies, protocols, and most importantly, *actions* of this institution. They cannot wait for us to “try harder,” we must *do* better, and do so now. We second the *Pipe Dream’s* editorial board, that “actions speak louder than words.” If this makes you uncomfortable, remember: *you* can breathe.

Sincerely, and in solidarity,

Jennifer Stoeber, English

Birgit Brander Rasmussen, English

Thomas Glave, English

Monika Mehta, English

Leo Wilton, Human Development

Lubna Chaudhry, Human Development

Gladys Jiménez-Muñoz, Sociology

Kelvin Santiago-Valles, Sociology

Ravi Palat, Sociology

Michael O. West, Sociology & Africana Studies

Bill Martin, Sociology

Nkiru Nzegwu, Africana Studies

Black Student Union, Binghamton University

African Student Organization, Binghamton University

PRISM, Binghamton University

X-Fact'r Step Team, Binghamton University

Caribbean Student Association, Binghamton University

National Society of Black Engineers, Binghamton University

David Sterling Brown, English

Patricia Lespinasse, Africana Studies

Joe Weil, English

Joe Keith, English

Denise Yull, Human Development

Nathaniel Mathews, Africana Studies

Cynthia Marasigan, Asian and Asian American Studies

John Kuhn, English

Katherine Martineau, Department of Asian and Asian American Studies

Bat-Ami Bar On, Philosophy and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies,
Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities

Benita Roth, Sociology

Ana Maria Candela, Sociology

Marilynn Desmond, English

Praseeda Gopinath, English

Jessie Reeder, English

Robert Guay, Philosophy

Leslie Heywood, English

Josh Price, Sociology

Andreas Pape, Economics

Sarah Gerck, Music

Mary Grace Albanese, English

Tom McDonough, Art History

Surya Parekh, English

Tina Chronopoulos, Classical and Near Eastern Studies

Giovanna Montenegro, Comparative Literature

John Havard, English

John Cheng, Asian and Asian American Studies

Mahua Sarkar, Sociology

Dara Silberstein, WGSS

Lisa Tessman, Philosophy

Colleen Bailey, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Paul Schleuse, Music

Marguerite Wilson, Human Development

Juanita Díaz-Cotto, Professor, Sociology Department

Sean Massey, WGSS

Dan Davis, Music

Sonja Kim, Asian and Asian American Studies

Carl Gelderloos, German & Russian Studies

Elizabeth Casteen, History

Vincent Grenier, Bartle Cinema

Elizabeth Mozer, Theatre

Kenneth White, Cinema

Ana Ros Matturro, Romance Languages

Anne Brady, Theatre

Claire Kovacs, Art Museum

Julia Walker, Art History

Courtney Ignarri, Harpur College

Kevin Hatch, Art History

Nathanael Andrade, History

Kym McDaniel, Cinema

Gerardo Pignatiello, Spanish

Kymel Yard ('12)

Keishorea Armstrong ('18)

Kyara Perkins, Sociology ('21)

Jeanette Patterson, Romance Languages

Rachel Samiani, Romance Languages

Octavio Borges-Delgado, Romance Languages

Sandra Casanova-Vizcaino, Romance Languages

Robyn Cope, Romance Languages

Antonio Sobejano-Moran. Romance Languages

Andrew Scholtz, Classical and Near Eastern Studies

Salvador J Fajardo, Romance Languages

Victoria Leigh Brown, WGSS

Leslie Gates, LACAS and Sociology

Sean F. Dunwoody, History/Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Hannah Jones, History

Keisha N. Blain, Ph.D. University of Pittsburgh, President, [African American Intellectual History Society](#) (AAIHS) ('08)

maria chaves daza, PhD ('18)

Stephanie Malmberg, Human Development, PhD ('18)

Qrri Rae, Human Rights

Nelson A. Nunez ('12)

Ross Youmans ('11)

Daniel Caracci ('10)

Carina Bandhauer, PhD (Sociology, '01)

Robert Schmidt, PhD (Sociology '10)

Karen M. Gagné, PhD (Sociology '08)

Steven Lewis ('18)

Victoria Delaney PhD ('19)

Eliza Gellis (BA '16)

Rigoberto Andino Jr. PhD (Sociology '19)

Peter L. Carlo Becerra, Sociology/Anthropology, Earlham College, PhD.
(Sociology 12')

Jason Read, Professor, University of Southern Maine, PhD (Philosophy '01)

Mindy Barnes, (Sociology '16, MSW '18)

Jowell Padró ('18)

Jillian Beloch, MSW ('16)

Yusef AbdulSabur ('97)

Kerri-Ann M. Smith, Education ('02, '12)

Reverend Felipe Ayala Jr. ('97)

Antwuan Walker ('97)

Hector Jimenez ('98)

William B Peake ('95)

Melissa R. Millen, MSW ('18)

Jessica R Dunn ('17)

Nigel Westmaas, Hamilton College (PhD Sociology, '06)

Jhodi-Ghaele Pommells, (BS '07)

Susan McKenna ('92)

Papa Sakho Political Science ('07)

Kassandra Pantoja ('92)

Laurie Jackson ('13)

Christopher Foster ('07)

Kim Marie Clark, Sociology/Africana ('11), MPA ('14)

Nikolay Karkov, PhD ('10)

Crystal Austin, PhD (BA/BS '12)

Agustin Lao-Montes, Sociology, PhD, ('03)

Christopher Foster ('07)

Roberta Laguerre-Frederique, MD ('94)

Jonathan Lohnes, PhD Candidate, Cornell University (MA, '15)

Johnette Neal Miller ('91)

Ivanna Colòn ('09, M.S. '14)

Lisa Iglesias ('01)

Alim J. Grant, Biology ('92)

Katharine Dawson, PhD ('04)

Seonghek Kang ('15)

You-Lin Tsai, PhD (Sociology '14)

Julianne E. Quinn (History '14, MAT '15)

Samantha Fox (PhD, 2017)

Zhandarka Kurti, Alum

Jordan Asulin, Sociology ('15)

Delmar Dualeh ('13)

Raven Gomez, Sociology and Environmental Science, ('16)

Cecilia Joslyn, history and anthropology ('21)

Jessica Flores ('98)

Robert Ryan ('10, MA '13)

Rodolfo Blackman ('91, '93)

Josué Quiñones ('10, MSW '12)

Jewdyer Osborne ('98, MA '00)

Emily Olander (MSW '19)

JVaughn Dominguez (BS '10)

Christopher Todd ('94)

Adam Flint, Sociology, (BA '88, MA '98)

Abby E. Murray (PhD, '16)

Kathleen Keogh, ('14)

Kate Fauvell ('02)

Eli Zuckerman, Environmental Studies ('17)

Prof. Rafael Landrón, History (MA '00)

Shanel Boyce ('16, '18)

Joe Tumbarello ('96)

Albert Fu, Kutztown University (Sociology, '09)

Kamila Barnes, DNP (BS '07)

Paula Gemma, parent of 2014 graduate

Deborah Cowell ('90, '94)

This letter has been sent to President Stenger, Provost Neiman, and Dean Klin as of 12:15 pm on January 17th, 2020. The Google Doc version, however is a living public document, and you may still lend your support as a member of the Binghamton University community (alumni, faculty, staff, admin, student group) by letting us know via Google Forms here: <https://forms.gle/BtBaEdofDu2YjuVi8>

Thank you for reading and sharing; we appreciate you.

