

SPECIAL EDITION – JULY 13, 2020

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Presidents' Message

Karen Chandler, Past-President
Thomas Crisp, President

Dear ChLA Membership:

This special edition of the ChLA newsletter is being published during a time of international unrest resulting from the murders of African American people like Ahmaud Arbery, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless others. We write this opening statement in anger and grief. We also write in solidarity with individuals who have raised their voices to protest social injustice and who have raised their

cameras to document and critique it, individuals like 17-year-old Darnella Frazier, the citizen-journalist who filmed the killing of George Floyd.

Members of ChLA have also asked us for more coverage of our members. Toward that end, we are featuring two pieces by a longtime ChLA member, Althea Tait, in conversation with the anti-racist work that has infused many areas of society. Althea was recently promoted to the level of associate professor with tenure at SUNY Brockport. She has worked as a consultant on diversity and inclusion. Her areas of research interest include Toni Morrison, aesthetics, children's literature, and African American and Women's Studies. She is the recipient of multiple awards and grants and will deliver the Francelia Butler Lecture at the 2021 ChLA conference in Atlanta, Georgia. We are grateful to Althea for her willingness to share these writings with all of us.

We join Althea in welcoming responses and reactions from each of you who reads these pieces. This could be something written in direct response to Althea's writings or, perhaps, her writings may move you to share a story of your own. Further, the release of this special edition has been timed to commemorate the 7-year anniversary of the “not guilty” verdict in the Trayvon Martin trial. We are also welcoming submissions that share a reflection on or related memory of the trial and its aftermath. Submissions may be published later this summer in a follow-up issue of the newsletter. Please send your materials to the newsletter editors Cathryn Mercier and Amy Pattee via the following link:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/193dc0d0686b406f805b1f3843d37219>.

In closing, leadership of the Children's Literature Association, including the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, recognizes the need to take action in order to better understand and change our own roles in perpetuating racism and anti-Blackness. We invite you to read more about and provide your ongoing input and feedback on the ways in which we are taking action to bring about much-needed change within our organization.

In solidarity,

Karen Chandler

Thomas Crisp

Introduction

by Althea Tait

We abide in a dystopia for Black lives. It is July 13—the day the verdict was delivered in the case for justice for then 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2013. Seven years should evoke rest, but we are in an 8 minutes and 46 seconds of denied-breathing world where Black lives are fraught with despair, pain, anger, and yet hope. I saw a water fountain recently shooting water eight or ten feet into the air with the sun bursting forth with its promising prisms and longed for a cleansing justice for Black lives. All Black lives—regardless of their shape, age, zip code, education, socio-economics, orientation, accent, ability to move as normalized bodies, religion, or language.

This moment returns me to the premise of Refreshing Waters/Turbulent Waters theme that framed our tough but balmy June days at the 2018 conference in San Antonio, TX. Then some ChLA members joined a movement, carrying fury and hope for Brown children unjustly detained in detention centers at the border. It was a call to action for everyone to echo the voices of dislocated migrant children and their loved ones. I hail the terms *echo* and *dislocated* intentionally, for we cannot be their voice. We can only compassionately echo the voices of the suffering, of the dislocated (in the way of Salazar-Parreñas), who forcibly migrated because of violence or by imposed choice, and even this echo is a distant one if we do not hail from the political location of suffering. The voice, as Bakhtin reminds us, belongs to the one who breathes their own intention into the cry, into the message.

The movement for ChLA members and activists (most importantly those who hail from Brown spaces of existence) took place ten days after Antwon Rose II was shot three times and killed by Police officers in Pittsburgh, PA. Rose like Martin was only 17. We lost his breath on Juneteenth no less; Juneteenth embodies the prolonged agony African Americans have endured in this nation. Rose died 24 days before the fifth anniversary of the release of the traumatizing verdict in the case for justice for Martin.

We had returned to this space in America again—a troubling palimpsest we have become disciplined to expect.

At this conference I spoke of empathy and Black and Brown children's lives as sites that could reorient our reading of hope, of the sanctity of life. In their tenderness and youth, they are teaching us—through their martyrdom. Empathy, or *einfühlung*, has its etymological roots in the German and distinguishes our ability to feel into another's pain. Using Thomas' *The Hate U Give*, I further described this "feeling into" could only be fostered by touch that finds one's humanity in another and thus serves as a space of possible translation of greater empathy—if we intentionally work beyond conflating our suffering with another's or appropriating their suffering as a way to control the narrative.

You have two narratives before you that I shared with Past and Present ChLA Presidents Karen Chandler and Thomas Crisp and they believed it would be beneficial for you to have at this moment in our world. I am certainly not the only Black or Brown ChLA member to have experienced the personal narrative (in part or in its entirety) I have traced. I originally shared the narrative with Thomas and Karen after having to miss a scheduled meeting because of the emotional and physical labor required to negotiate this space, especially after George Floyd's death. When they posed the possibility for publication in this venue, I wanted fig leaves. I have run a marathon between the poles of comprehending and resisting the insidious nature of racism that licenses injury and of perpetual

forgiveness—in private. Then I considered all of the Black and Brown members who have suffered a litany of costs.

I believe we are in an hour where the pain and suffering we have stifled and suppressed can and should be felt into. They should be heard and echoed within our departments and institutes. In these pieces, which were prompted by my institute's desire to craft an anti-racism statement and a Black Lives Matter Statement when we own neither the ethos nor practice of both, you will hear the fury and agony I locked away. I lament what many of your colleagues, friends, and family—or even you yourself may have smiled away, swallowed away, wept away, limped away, ached away, written away. Or you have exhausted these strategies to survive the perils, even the trauma, of being Black and Brown in the Academy. This existence must change.

I believe, now more than ever, as you find yourselves in interventional positions as administrators, publishers, editors, colleagues, mentors, friends, allies and/or activists, Black lives—all of them in their complex and overlapping contexts—need to be a priority. I challenge you to see where you have been complicit with the moments where Black lives are gently moved into the margins in between the killings.

This will be the temptation in the coming weeks. As I note in the open letter to my department and Faculty and Staff of Color on our campus, this is not a time for opportune silence or inactivity. It never has been.

As a response to my laments, many of my colleagues have begun to acknowledge their complicity with a rank-nature culture we live in that makes white supremacy prevail in unexpected and advertent ways. With me, they are reflecting on the ways we might affect healing change. I encourage you to ask your students, colleagues, friends, and loved ones who hail from racialized political locations how you might be an advocate for their breath, their lives.

In closing, I implore you—if you are one of the survivors and thrivers of this abuse, breathe. If you are one to repeatedly perpetuate the harm and malice, stop. Seek help and grow beyond the injury that causes you to injure others.

May this July 13, 2020 unite us more than ever.

While there are more resources, these pieces are a start:

“The Life of a Black Academic: Tired and Terrorized,” by Henrika McCoy.

Inside Higher Ed, June 12, 2020

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/06/12/terror-many-black-academics-are-experiencing-has-left-them-absolutely-exhausted>

“Black Anxiety Spiked After George Floyd. So Thanks for Checking In, But No, I'm Not OK,” by Marshall Carr Jr.

NBC News Think, June 23, 2020

<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/black-anxiety-spiked-after-george-floyd-so-thanks-checking-no-ncna1231809>

Let Us Lament

by Althea Tait

While cottonwood snows across the city of Rochester, its cloying fibers landing on my skin hail the oppression and toil of black enslaved Americans. I recall the redemptive grief of black American ancestors, of George Floyd being put to rest in Houston on Tuesday. Since his murder by police on May 25, 2020, people across the US and around the world have felt themselves called to the cause of George Floyd, a black man who died pleading for his breath and calling for his mother. George Floyd was speaking for himself as Derek Chauvin's knee pressed into his neck, but he was also speaking for all of the people whose lives have for four centuries been treated as expendable. In that moment, George Floyd became a martyr, his lips those of a prophet pleading for black breath, for black life. A man who could not breathe now inspires millions.

And when we gather in George Floyd's name, in Minneapolis and Washington, DC and St. Louis and Brooklyn and Seattle, Houston and Rochester, we gather not only to grieve the weight of our sadness; we gather to lament, to voice a prayer born from hardship. To lament is to grieve without restraint, restriction, or interrogation, to acknowledge the injustice in the present situation, and to give expression to the suffering. We lament because we know that only by acknowledging injustice can we hope to begin remedying it.

Let us lament, then, but as we do we must keep in mind that not all injuries to people of color are as visible as Derek Chauvin's knee on George Floyd's neck. There is also the slow suffocation of structural racism, an asphyxiation of collective possibility that in the end is no less deadly than more immediate forms of violence.

As we lament both forms of racism here in Rochester, let us remember that SUNY Brockport, a major institution of higher education, is just 18.6 miles away. Let us lament in recent days the City is roiled with the pain of black and brown people as it did in 1964, when riots erupted in our beloved Rochester 22 days after the Civil Rights Act was enacted. Let us lament: black anguish soaked our streets then, and we are here again 56 years later, with black anguish soaking our campus--again.

On the day of George Floyd's funeral, let us lament these wounds, rather than cover them up and allow them to fester: without acknowledging history, we will inevitably repeat it.

Let us lament that SUNY Brockport's Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Cephas Archie serves the College no more. A son of Houston like George Floyd, Dr. Archie inspired faculty, staff, and students of color, and in general, by listening to them. Dr. Archie was SUNY Brockport's best hope of identifying the structural racism rotting the College from within, until he was terminated on January 24, four days after Martin Luther King Jr. day, without notice and without apparent cause. Let us lament recently an expert in the field conveyed the challenging nature of Dr. Archie's circumstances through this analogy: if Damon Williams, one of the leaders in the field of Chief Diversity Officers, served at the College without immunity from higher authority, within two years he would either leave because of personal health issues or be forced to resign.

Let us lament the experience of black and brown students on our campus in December of 2014 as they protested the loss of Eric Garner's breath, and that of Michael Brown only to be heckled by some onlookers screaming "n-----s."

Let us lament that in the spring of 2015 students of color convinced former President Halstead, the Faculty Senate, and the Brockport Student Government to adopt an anti-racism resolution in order to have "a systemic accountability for racism," and yet this racism is more prevalent than ever on our campus at this time.

Let us lament the nightmares that haunted a black female freshman who experienced a hate crime in her dorm room in the fall of 2016. Let us lament the waking nightmares our students of color admitted to as they confronted daily because the perpetrator of that unsolved crime walked among them, leaving them to wonder if the individual might bring a gun to a classroom or a dorm.

Let us lament that while walking in the village, a group of black female students was told the sidewalk was for "whites only."

Let us lament that when black and brown students repeatedly brought their concerns to campus leadership--to a student government forum on campus police reform in spring 2018, to professors and administrators following another hate crime in Hartwell Hall in 2019, to a Town Hall meeting after Dr. Archie left the university in 2020--only to encounter racial bias in the very institutions designed to protect them.

Let us lament that students, staff, and faculty of color recognized the historical ramifications when leadership allowed the Campus Chief of Police to investigate Dr. Archie's work history in response to the protests that followed his departure, with the goal of fabricating an after-the-fact rationale for his dismissal.

Let us lament the non-ethnic faculty and staff who bemoaned this action privately but kept public silence.

Let us lament those who were privately proud but publicly silent when student protestors made their way to the 7th floor of the Allen Administrative Building after the Town Hall meeting to demand answers and justice.

Let us lament the timidity of white faculty allies who compassionately fed and hydrated student protestors in the months of January and February on our campus, but did not join the protests themselves.

Let us lament the culture of retaliation that discouraged most black and brown faculty and staff from joining the student protestors.

Let us lament that one white female administrator who did advocate for black and brown employees was released from the College six days before Christmas.

Let us lament that reports of discrimination and bias toward black and brown employees are not adequately investigated as the standards and spirit of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion require.

Let us lament when a white female leader interprets the events of a leadership meeting by appropriating Central Park, NY white female dog walker and black male birdwatching dynamics, attempting to contain a black male leader who advocated for brown and black students and employees.

Let us lament when we have the only black executive support on the campus being overlooked for title promotion when the white executive support received their title promotion. Let us lament white allies were aware of this injury and did nothing.

Let us lament when we activate the rhetoric of anti-racism and do not own its spirit.

Let us lament discussions of anti-racism that exclude from the table those whom racism has most harmed. Let us lament that a black veteran of the SUNY system who steers the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Awards committee is not at the table to create an anti-racist College because she dared to breathe the truth.

Let us lament that the table holds no place for a black alumnus--justly outspoken--who has been a past United University Professions' president for more than one term and a successful, integral leader on our campus for four decades.

Let us lament when Latinx administrators resign from a system that undermines their achievements to the point that they cannot breathe without an ombudsperson.

Let us lament ethnic employees close their doors upon hearing the voice of their white supervisors who have abused their spirit with intimidation because they engaged in what many other non-ethnic colleagues take for granted—the freedom to openly express professional disagreement based on specialized knowledge.

Let us lament that even with SUNY supervision on the campus some of these systemic racist practices and biases have continued.

Let us lament that what I am about to expose will cause others to lament. These narratives are not anomalies in the system. The caveat—"silence is violence."

Let us lament an anecdotal account that lays bare the suffering of being black in this system. A black, female Associate Professor of English, who negotiates a disability, who is the only black professor in a building that houses upward of 67 tenured and/or tenure track professors and a Dean's office was failed by the system because of structural racism.

In the year that is most impactful to one's career in the SUNY system, this black woman experienced the most acute discrimination and bias. After engaging in the unusually burdensome service load a faculty of color inherently provides and teaching two new course preps (both dealing with topics of race and difference, which we see now more than ever our students need the material for their civic engagement) and a reinvented graduate course on Toni Morrison in the spring of 2018, this junior scholar was depleted, could barely function physically for a month, and spent her budget and discretionary funds fighting symptoms. This professor was food insecure at times until family support intervened. This professor shared this experience with departmental leadership and requested a more tenable workload for the fall as three new course preps were assigned to her. This junior scholar already had taught three

new course preps (two of them new designs) across the previous two consecutive semesters. Let us lament it is unheard of, as this professor learned from colleagues across the College, to be assigned this unusual workload, especially at a tender time of preparing for promotion. Also this professor, as leadership was aware of, was working towards completion of a manuscript under an advanced contract with a University Press, which would count towards tenure publishing requirements. The black female professor's request was denied. She was assigned another new prep for the following semester. Let us lament that she implored senior colleagues in leadership to help her understand why she was given this workload--she was told to take her inquiries to departmental leadership who assigned the workload in the first place.

Let us lament that in this same semester of an unusual workload assignment this professor experienced inappropriate sexual behavior from a campus community member and after reporting it, she received no support.

Let us lament when this black female professor recounted her experiences revolving around the injurious behavior, she was met with derision when she listed her wishes for healing action to a Title IX Official who was already aware of the individual from some previous context.

Let us lament upon closing the semester, she had to receive emergency treatment to deal with the outcome of the distress upon her body.

Let us lament, this black, female professor eventually met with the Affirmative Action Officer who requested the involvement of Dr. Archie. Let us lament after multiple meetings, some requested by the CDO, there was discontinuation of the abuse. But then things became worse: a white senior faculty member pushed against her--at an Honors Ceremony no less--so forcefully that her entire body weight shifted. When she inquired what the person was doing, they noted they were just saying hello because according to them she had "snuck in" to an auditorium that has only two entrances.

Let us lament the only intervention in this faculty member's circumstances came from the CDO's office through a Faculty Diversity Fellowship which later was hindered in the fall of 2019.

Let us lament five months after the first unwanted physical contact with a white colleague, and in spite of the fixed boundary her comportment portrayed, a white Cabinet Leader separated a parent and prospective student standing before her at an Open House, wrapped around her and persisted to rub small circles upon her sacrum.

After two years of reporting the conditions to every internal administrative office on the campus and receiving no reprieve or justice, one still does not understand the breach of boundaries or why such tenderness in form is absent in the policies and governing operations that impact people of color at the College. Are there no sacred grounds concerning the contexts of our suffering? Are our psyches, bodies, and experiences so common that they are touchable upon the whim of leaders and yet untouchable when we are distressed by systemic oppression?

Let us lament this faculty member suffered more retaliation and poor treatment which led to undue interruptions in her health towards the end of fall 2019. In January 2020, this person met with the Affirmative Action Officer and the CDO to request a permanent office change, as she was giving herself

permission to be human. While intellectually managing the stress, she explained, the body interpreted things differently.

Let us lament this was the response: "... Thanks for your patience as I looked into your request. Unfortunately, there isn't available office space for you to move to. The offices are all occupied so you will need to remain in your current office....We are committed to continuing the dialogue in an effort to discuss concerns and move forward in a respectful and positive manner for all."

Let us lament the rhetoric "respectful and positive"--historic ways of oppressing black breath when it righteously disagrees with the system. Let us lament while respectfully going through a grueling tenure and promotion process, six in person discussions with campus leadership, as well as, six written communications pertaining to the sustained working dynamics, this person was hemorrhaging and required procedures to rule out more critical concerns in the summer of 2019. This black female faculty member of the College was hemorrhaging when she told the Affirmative Action Officer in February of 2019 she did not have the strength to pursue a formal inquiry as to the metrics for junior faculty workload and the Officer promised to inquire of the practices informally. This black female professor never learned of the Officer's findings.

Let us lament again, this *person* is not an anomaly in the system.

Let us lament I have to expose these truncated, private details of my career at the College, and it would be an unfaithful account if I did not mention three colleagues (two women and one man) who provided salvific compassion during this time.

Let us lament, the publicizing of this narrative is compulsory because, as history reveals, crisis has become the College Leadership's motive to address the pain and systemic racism that has prevailed on our campus.

If SUNY Brockport is to embrace an anti-racist climate and culture, it must uncover the wounds, the wrongs. As Dr. King wrote in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed [. . .] to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured." Black and brown students, staff, faculty, and alumni can play an important role in exposing this injustice, but healing cannot take place until SUNY Brockport's leadership acknowledges the truth and apologizes publicly. Once this occurs, the hard work of re-inventing a truly antiracist College begins. This work requires the participation of all. College leadership must do more than revise and upgrade former Equity Diversity Inclusion strategic plans; they must go to the root of racism in the College's structure and cede power to leaders of color who have shown the courage to innovate and the willingness to challenge the status quo. The positions accorded to these innovators must be structured to protect from retaliation by the system they seek to reform. These leaders must be equipped with the authority to make foundational change and the resources necessary to implement it ("budgets are moral documents"). Non-ethnic allies must set aside their fantasies of saving us from the indefensible hell we have endured; they must put aside the timidity their comfortable existences instill and work beside us as true equals. They must confront their friends instead of protecting ecosystems that promote harm. And we must all be deliberate in whom we place our trust, choosing those who are morally brave and radically honest over those who tell us what we want to hear. If SUNY Brockport is committed to the rhetoric it espouses and is to heal forward as an antiracist Institute, it must acknowledge the direct

correlations between the murder of George Floyd and its inherent connection to intangible and material violences extended to the many Dr. Archies on this campus.

And for the readers who would ask--why would you put yourself at risk for further abuse? My response: "all necks are on the line," as Toni Morrison warned. There are black and brown staff and faculty who live in professional, emotional, and physical fear. There are my students--from many ethnic backgrounds and locations of difference--who have no reprieve from a daily commute or a return to their home as a sanctuary. Some of them are participating in Rochester and New York City protests and experiencing a mixture of pride, unimaginable grief and anxiety. What "normal" will they return to? Even with Covid-19 concerns--which have distressed black and brown families--if not now, then when will be the right time?

Let this be a lamentation no longer.

We breathe--8 minutes, 46 seconds, and beyond.

A Letter to My Colleagues
by Althea Tait

Hello Everyone,

This has been a grievous time for us all in this nation. But for folks of color, in particular black families in this nation--it has been a painful time.

Do not—I repeat—do not write a statement the ethos of this department cannot stand behind.

When I suffered physically and had to be hospitalized for what the physicians believed to be multiple mild heart attacks in the spring of 2017, I came to work upon release against the doctors' orders because we only had two classes at that point in the semester and foolishly I feared my students would suffer. One colleague saw me and said with concern (and loud enough to hear)—you look ill. You look as if you are hurting. We were four maybe five feet from the white senior colleague assigned to me as a mentor upon beginning my career here, and this person did not say one word. When I met with the Department chair, the Affirmative Action Officer, and the Interim VP of Diversity, who is also a member of our department, 13 days later and requested *two* online office hours to help me recover during the weeks ahead as I had extensive medical intervention, my request was denied then and there by the department chair. I was told my students, who we groom to take part in office hour dynamics with faculty, would then go to my colleagues in my absence, causing an inequity of service. The Affirmative Action Officer, who is no longer with us, suggested that hybrid models across campuses serve as a precedent for my request. The chair noted they would have to weigh the matter further. I waited nine weeks. Nine weeks. Nine weeks for an official response because according to the Affirmative Action Officer—he was waiting for my department to respond (I asked him two times in person within the first month) and I asked both he and the chair in writing on more than one occasion. After the meeting, I asked the Interim VP for their assistance in person and via text. There was no intervention. Nine weeks. Nine weeks. Nine weeks.

Now you want to craft a Black Lives Matter statement. Which Black lives matter?

In the semester that is most distressful for any junior faculty member on the tenure track, I was assigned three new course preps. I had taught two new preps and a re-invented graduate course in the spring of that same year. I was already struggling in my health, which departmental leadership knew of. I had a co-edited book to help complete that was under an advanced contract which I needed to count towards tenure. Still after appealing to department leadership, the course load remained the same. Because of the area of my specialization, all of the courses dealt with race. At this moment in our nation, we see this is a topic our students require to civically engage in our society. I would be remiss if I did not reflect on the labor we all invest in our pedagogy; however, teaching race and difference has particular challenges. Each one of my courses brings with it a burden of emotional labor that a course in Milton, say, or Jane Austen simply does not entail. And teaching these courses as a black scholar brings its own documented laborious negotiations at times. After the untenable workload I was given in the fall of 2018 that included a course titled “Legacies of Slavery” no less, I asked three senior colleagues why I was given such a load. And apparently no faculty member within the department or across the College (which I have spoken to) has ever been assigned this course load—period. Never mind this load being assigned during a stage of vulnerability in one's career. The first person I asked about the course load is a leader of intersectionality discussions on our campus and in the City. This is a theory birthed from the black

lives, the black breath, and the black women's labor who sued General Motors for the overlapping oppression of racism and sexism: *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* in 1976, the year I was born. I was told, albeit empathetically, they did not know why I was given such a load and I should just get the dossier done. I asked the APT Chair why I was given the load—I was told to speak with the Chair. I asked another senior colleague, who previously served as a chair of the department, to meet me at a coffee shop and there I asked her why I was given such an untenable load. Her response—discuss this matter with the chair. Why didn't you draft a Black Lives Matter statement then?

There was some drafting that was done in our department: the following spring 2019, the APT Committee drafted changes to the departmental constitution with one of the two proposed changes being the curating of the dossier. My dossier was originally five binders in order to include the thirteen new course preps/designs, research, and bountiful service that most black and brown faculty provide. I modeled mine after two white women's full tenure binders and a white male's tenure binder (who exhaustively included everything) and yet my fifth year review binder looked similar to their tenure binders. I was asked to trim the dossiers, which I did. There was no departmental discussion of protecting junior faculty, especially minority faculty that the Academy has well documented will meet nuanced challenges in achieving tenure. Where was the Black Lives Matter statement then? Anyone who played a role in this process should not be crafting a Black Lives Matter statement on anyone's behalf.

Do you know what the New Jim Crowism looks like in this department and across this institute: we can do whatever we want to you— withhold or hinder legitimate support, discuss workload during faculty meetings while disavowing true structural changes to work load need for black and brown faculty, enlist and participate in vicious gossip and rumors towards black faculty, stand by their door and discuss your workload in an attempt to suppress or to shame a black person for raising the issue, ask this black woman how her research is going with a grin knowing no one can pace research with such a workload, ask this black woman how she is doing when she repeatedly in writing and in person asked for this practice to be amended—because your actions have signaled you do not care about this black life or its wellbeing (further, negotiating a disability on some days makes it a challenge to answer that question), withhold recognition and/or congratulations (Meg Norcia posted on the department's refrigerator the press release for a plenary talk I was to deliver at the University of Washington, Seattle with the note Congratulations above it—two people in the department did so), fail to include an invited talk to a Harvard University seminar in the list of accomplishments in personnel materials until this black faculty member requests it, make an inquiry with the Title IX office as to how many cases this black faculty member has handled at the College while not inquiring what strategies can be employed when the person is facing Title IX issues in the classroom, investigate UUP policies as to whether or not it is legal for this black faculty to have classroom grading support during health interruptions yet assign the only black professor, by the way, in the building of 67 or more tenure/tenure track faculty, who negotiates a disability six new preps over three consecutive semesters, assign five of these courses within the last two semesters with three assigned during the fifth year review, penalize this black faculty member for speaking up—do you know I was assigned another new course for the following spring in 2019 after asking a white senior colleague to negotiate a solution for me with the department chair? Amid documented health interruptions and appeals to the system, in four and half years, I taught 14 new course preps/designs. I have taught 16 new course preps/designs in five and half years of being at the College. This is a truncated list of the civilized cruelty I have endured.

And yes I have spoken to leadership about the ongoing issues. Based on Dr. Archie's request in the Spring of 2019 to the Dean of the College, I finally met with him and the Affirmative Action Officer, who was hearing my narrative for the third time. The Dean told me he wanted to earn the trust of faculty of color. I requested leadership be held accountable and the abusive practices cease. The result: more sanctioned violence. The only intervention came through Dr. Archie's office (and I am not an anomaly—he helped many people on this campus regardless of their race, sex, religion, ability, orientation, position, etc.), and yet this redemptive help was hindered for an additional semester through the most egregious breaches in humanity that involved another campus community member.

And many of you have known of the conditions I have endured either personally and/or through gossip. Only three of you have made it your business to inquire how I was doing and to offer genuine support during this time. Most recently a fourth person has shown redemptive kindness and support. Now you want to draft a Black Lives Matter statement?

In January upon Dr. Archie's troubling separation from the College, one of you emailed me and asked if you could help by teaching a class or two because you knew students would be coming to me more than usual and thus adding to my service load. I responded thank you, but my students needed to hear from me, a black woman, at that time within an African American Novel course and a graduate course covering Toni Morrison's legacy in the American literary canon. And then I sent the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Silence was the response.

Now you want to craft a Black Lives Matter Statement? Do not use my people's breath and/or their lives to make a statement you hold no ethos for. Even some of our black students have gone through undue obstacles in this department. It is evident some black people's breath and lives matter for this department and this Institute and other black lives do not. That is a part of the mystery and pathology of racism and white supremacy: in the 19th century it operated through a taxonomy that distinguished the dollar value and/or worth of a slave based on properties appreciated by those in power. There is no conflation in the parallel drawn here. If you do not comprehend the weight of the collective unconsciousness and the undue burdens black folks have to deal with on this campus that cause their lives to intersect with this unfortunate history, then you must probe your soul as to the validity of your participation in crafting a Black Lives Matter statement at this moment in time or any other.

While I endured the indefensible hell I went through in the 2018/2019 academic year, many of you smiled at me (especially those of you on the APT committee), asking me for an agreement to this oppression. It is a conspiracy you asked me to join: we let you in, but on our terms.

When the leader of this department stepped down (and I am saddened this person and their family is negotiating the space they are but our black families matter too!), some of you who have known of and participated in the challenges I endured noted they were a *wonderful* leader. Do you know how hurtful and grievous it was to see that statement come from white, senior full professors who claim to be feminists? If the previous department leader could do that to a black woman's life, why are you proclaiming that black lives matter now?

Do not use my people's breath and/or lives as a basis for your usage of this claim. Our house is on fire. Faculty and staff of color have been experiencing oppression even this semester with a SUNY consultant on campus. Some of them who hail from other locations of difference in their orientation even have noted experiencing relief from Covid-19 operations because they could sense their bodies in a

space ease because coming on this campus is like piercing darkness. Please do not recruit and hire more diverse staff and faculty. I repeat: please do not recruit and hire more diverse staff and faculty—not **until** you put this fire out.

You cannot protect them from the systemic abuses that impact their finances, physical health, mental health, families, careers, and beyond. Many of you in the last in-person faculty meeting for the spring noted you did not believe leadership had effectively guided this campus in the way of healing race issues. One person, even with senior faculty status, noted they were intimidated to speak the truth before leadership. I said it then and I am saying it now—our students did when they went to the 7th Floor. They still do. I said it then and I am saying it now—do not leave the next generation of black and brown students, staff, and faculty to deal with this issue.

Then some of you noted you would not be the fall person for administration's poor decisions and, in relationship to the added burden of tending to needs of racial diversity, that you did not want individuals controlling your level of affect with students, in particular minority students. Black and brown faculty serve these students without reprieve because we love all of our students (many of the students we willingly and with great joy help and mentor are white students). We have paid for doctors' visits when students did not have insurance; we have supplied groceries and/or personal hygiene items for our students; we have mentored them; we have secured their esteems when entities of this institute have torn them a part; we have helped them get into graduate programs so that they could end the cycle of poverty and oppression in their families after they have been depleted and used by this institute to be educators of diversity when we can hire people to do the work (folks, "budgets are moral documents..."); we have been psychologists and counselors, and the list goes on.

In this same faculty meeting in which we addressed the faculty senate proposal, which was crafted by a generous and honorable white colleague which ended up being tabled by the way, one of our senior colleagues and former departmental leaders said, we're just not going to get it right in the end. I was grieved then and I am grieved now when you wish to draft a *statement* of solidarity for Black lives. I wish we would have the same attitude with which we approached our studies in graduate school: a person was deemed a failure if one earned Cs in a graduate program. For some reason, and our record proves this, we are just fine with being mediocre in the area of racial justice on our campus and allowing black and brown students, staff, and faculty to foot the burden. We lurch into action when the Press is on our grounds. We slouch in inactivity when the media leaves. Look closely at the new strategic plan for equity, diversity, and inclusion: it's like putting a Brooks Brothers suit on a corpse. There is very little attention to structural racism which is the core issue of our problems.

Do not write a Black Lives Matter Statement. Write an apology with contrition and avow to make changes with those who have been harmed the most at the table—why would you leave them out of the discussion or push them away until they feel they have no recourse for their dignity and the next generation of leaders on this campus other than to pursue legal action? The message I am attaching is one I delivered to our Interim Chief Diversity Officer on Wednesday, asking for it to be released as an open letter to our campus through the OEDI. If we are to fully embrace the zeitgeist that George Floyd's life has availed (and all of the other black lives that are too countless to roll call), then those who have endured the context of racial oppression on this campus, those who are angry and hurt deserve a right to breathe on our campus.

This is why I asked for separate Community Conversations to begin with in March, and my request was supported by those in the room during the planning stages. No one from this department showed up. Our

students, many of whom protested and who earned our praise early in the spring semester, were in that room in need of our support and willingness to talk to one another. One of our colleagues who is the co-chair of the President's Council on the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development on this campus said they had a yoga class to attend during this Community Conversation and would attempt to come thereafter if possible (and I must note the Council's leadership as far as Chairs within the Council is concerned is all white in 2020). Now you want to draft a Black Lives Matter Statement? Now?

There is a reason why the FSOC has lost faith in our colleagues and the leadership; we have implored you to hold leadership accountable with us and to change the structure of this campus when it comes to racial equity. It is as if you have become feudal lords in this system, protecting your precious ecosystems. Do not implement a white coverup through a Black Lives Matter Statement. It is 18 days since George Floyd's death and our students, some who have texted me from Rochester and NYC, have been protesting and are anxious about the spirit—not the codified changes and written planning—but the spirit of racial justice on our campus.

Codified statements and changes on this campus make me wary. White supremacists used rhetoric and planning to make statements and to codify changes and/or implement policies and laws without honoring the spirit of the laws or the people the policies and laws were intended to protect. Do I have to remind us of the 15th Amendment? In a room of over 600 constituents and local community members, the Media, Civic leaders, and the Mayor of Rochester—seven days after our nation celebrated Civil Rights agendas through Martin Luther King, Jr. day—our College President told us they were not aware of Dr. Archie's mother being ill prior to releasing him. The latest report via the media's coverage of legal documents notes this leader was aware. What matters most about this potential context is that we cannot trust in what leadership shares with us when it comes to Black lives. This is a troubling reminder of our nation's history during slavery and Jim Crow days—black people were considered children required to believe anything. If leadership was not truthful then in the midst of a storm on our campus when we needed transparency and truth the most, how can we trust the veracity of their words regarding changes in racial equity and justice on this campus now? If this treatment is acceptable to you, then you are a part of the problem. The roiling violence and burning in our streets across the nation in the 99th year commemorating the Tulsa Race Riots remains disconnected from the raced violence that takes place on our campus on a daily basis. There are over 400 black employees. And we are reminded too often on this campus of the 400 years of oppression our people endured in this nation.

Important questions to ask are: would we even be having this conversation if the CDO was not released, if we had not suffered public embarrassment in the Press and in the larger national and regional communities, or if SUNY did not show up on our campus?

The conditions remain because our white colleagues allow it to remain so. In this department, my black life, my black breath is evidence of this.

And I may stand alone after this released grievance, but that is just fine. I have done so for some time in this department and at this institute, which I have proudly mentored and served our students alongside you. I have visited some of you when you were hospitalized or your children were in NICU's, made meals for some of you who lost loved ones, listened to you when a child was off their path, when a parent was dealing with health issues, when a loved one passed away, or when a relationship and/or marriage was failing. I have been there.

I can no longer be silent on this issue in this national moment of crisis and watch you craft statements you do not abide by—as Toni Morrison has wisely asserted, "all necks are on the line." Do not cover yourselves. Grieve. Then make the necessary changes.

With conviction,

AT

& if you care anything about antiracism agendas on our campus, read the attached Lament. I do not speak for any one group. I speak as an individual and release these words at 6:09 a.m. with a burden because of what I have experienced and have witnessed.