



Student Government
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Dear Hawkeyes,

On behalf of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG), we are outraged alongside you. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless other Black people are indicative of the systemic racism and violence embedded in institutions. Police violence disproportionately affects Black Americans as they are three times more likely to be killed by police than white Americans ([Mapping Police Violence](#), 2013–19). These disparities are rooted in a history of anti-Blackness and oppression that has unjustifiably targeted Black Americans. Our society consistently denies Black, Indigenous, and people of color equitable opportunities and fundamental freedoms—including the right to live. This is not just a civil rights issue; this is a human rights crisis.

As student government leaders, we are dedicated to using our platform to advocate for racial and social justice in our community. USG Director of Justice and Equity, Ruth Kahssai, is collaborating with the Executive Director for Belonging & Inclusion, Dr. Maria Bruno, to create virtual healing spaces for Black students, staff, and faculty to engage in open, brave conversation revolving national events while in community with one another. We are also working to improve internal social justice education for our members to emphasize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campus. Further, USG, with help of our Black Constituency Senator Adeline Barron, is creating a round table to provide space for Black student voices to discuss police violence, University of Iowa relationship with police, and discrimination towards Black students on our campus. USG and GPSG leadership are committed to determining how we best move forward in addressing these urgent issues. We are continuing the conversation and updates on both the healing spaces and roundtables are forthcoming.

We stand in solidarity with our Black students, faculty, staff, and community members. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive campus environment for all students free of harassment and discrimination. Still, we have a long way to go to achieve this ideal. Nearly half (45%) of under-represented minority undergraduate students report experiencing racial discrimination at the University of Iowa ([2018 Undergraduate Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Campus Climate Survey and Listening Sessions Report](#), p. 13). Our institution can and must do better to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to foster tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect.

Therefore, we call on senior level administrators to authentically demonstrate values of cultural competence and personally reflect on their contributions to the racial injustice not only within our institution, but through their interactions with students and the community. While policy and institutional change to create a more equitable campus is crucial, we also call on university leadership to acknowledge and take accountability for instances of anti-Blackness, racism, and minimizing student stories. This issue does not stop at the recognition of police violence against Black people, and this violence is not unique to law enforcement: these systems are interconnected within higher education. We recognize and support the existence of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan and other institutional efforts, but these are only first steps. At any institution for higher education, Black students deserve to be celebrated, recognized, and heard. We ask leadership to consider:

How have not only the University of Iowa, but you yourself contributed to the policing of lives, education, and voices of Black students on our campus?

To the Hawkeyes across our country stepping up and pushing for progress — thank you. You are representing the very change we hope you create on our campus and after leaving our home here at the University of Iowa. To those on the sidelines: join the fight. Advancing racial justice cannot be solely placed on already burdened Black population and other communities of color. It is the responsibility of us all.

Here are some ways you can invest in racial justice:

1. **Take a course or utilize University of Iowa resources to deepen your understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion:**
 - a. Find a [list of classes here](#).
 - b. [Virtual engagement](#) opportunities from Diversity Resources
2. **If able, donate resources to community organizations doing impactful, urgent work:**
 - a. [Eastern Iowa Community Bond Project](#): Organization with the mission of increasing access to due process by providing bail funds to protesters who have been detained
 - b. [“How to Support Protestors in Every City”](#)
 - c. [Campaign Zero](#): Dedicated to limiting police interventions, improving community interactions, and ensuring accountability
3. **Read and engage with anti-racism books, essays, and other resources:**
 - a. [Mapping Police Violence](#)
 - b. [Anti-racism Resources](#)
 - c. [Books About Race](#)
 - d. [An Essential Reading Guide for Fighting Racism](#)
4. **Support local black-owned businesses in Iowa City**
5. **Contact your local, state, and federal representatives to advocate on issues of racial justice:**
 - a. [Find your representatives](#)
 - b. Reference [Hawk The Vote](#) materials and resources to be an active, informed, civically engaged voter

We strongly encourage you to seek every opportunity available to learn, engage, and speak up. As you do so, please continue to prioritize your health and safety during the ongoing public health emergency. Also, please be aware of your mental health and the mental health of those around you. For our Black students, reach out for support, below is a list of university resources available to provide support and assistance.

- [Multicultural and International Student Support and Engagement](#)
- [Center for Diversity and Enrichment](#)
- [Campus Inclusion Team](#)
- [Office of Graduate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)
- [University Counseling Service](#)
- [Student Care and Assistance](#)

Finally, confronting racism is not limited to this moment in history; commit to continuously building the type of future we want and the kind of world we need.

In solidarity,

Connor Wooff, USG President

Mara Smith, USG Vice President

Ruth Kahssai, USG Director of Justice and Equity

Mackensie Graham, GPSG President

Ellen Kiser, GPSG Vice President

Rachel Maller, GPSG Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair