

## 2017 Racial Justice Retreat Pre-Program Preparation

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

During fall 2015, the Black Students of Emory University movement presented university administrators with [13 demands](#) concerning racial justice at the institution. Within days, Emory officials issued an [initial response](#) and engaged with Emory student leaders to plan a retreat to address all issues set forth in the demands.

[Convened in February 2016](#), the Racial Justice Retreat spanned more than six hours and drew nearly 100 invited guests. Approximately half were students and the remainder faculty, staff, and administrators. The gathering produced constructive dialogue and [recommendations](#).

A Next Steps Working Group of students and administrators was formed at the end of the retreat. The group was charged with incorporating feedback from retreat participants and the larger Emory community – and developing next steps in the ongoing process of reshaping the racial contours of a major university. This led to the formation of the [Commission on Racial and Social Justice](#), which replaced the Next Steps Group. The Commission met [several times](#) in 2016 and is continuing its work this academic year.

The goal is to create a sustainable movement that reimagines and recreates a more socially just university community and positions the institution as a leader on issues of social justice – a goal that aligns closely with Emory's [mission](#) “to create, preserve, teach, and apply knowledge in the service of humanity.”

### **13 DEMANDS**

[Below is a summary of the 13 Demands submitted to Emory for response.](#)

#### **Demand 1: Communication Regarding Injustices on Campus**

Emory University must recognize traumatic events that Black students experience on campus via the campus-wide emails sent to Emory University affiliates with emory.edu email addresses. These events shall be reported to the Bias Incident report. We demand that the administration of Emory University make the broad contexts and situations reported to the bias incident report known to the entire Emory community via campus-wide emails in order to increase awareness to every community within Emory University about racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and other forms of injustice. In order to create a community of care the entire Emory University community (including all school divisions, faculty, staff, and students) must know the community's ills and collectively work together to combat them towards justice for all.

### **Demand 2: Bias Incident Reporting**

The Bias Incident Reporting that Emory University has not been efficient because they have not thoroughly tended to the concerns of those who have used the reporting system. The micro-aggressions and macroaggressions that Black students experience which lead to our trauma should not be regarded for the sole purpose of data collection but should be taken seriously and met with the highest level of urgency and care. In order to demonstrate this urgency and care, we demand that the Bias Response Team email a personalized email to the reporter (the person who used the Bias Incident Reporting) within 1-2 days of a Bias Incident Report receipt. Also, we demand that the Bias Response Team send a personalized response (that includes action steps to take for self-care and details on how to properly sanction the offender to the reporter by the University administration) within one week of the Bias Incident Report receipt.

### **Demand 3: Counseling and Psychological Services**

Due to the systematic oppression faced by Black students throughout the world via colorism, racism, classism, mass incarceration, police brutality and all other injustices we need psychological services that cater to our unique psychological needs. Emory University prides itself on being responsive to the whole Emory University student (spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally), therefore, in order to include the Black student, we demand for the Emory University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to provide unique and alternative methods of counseling for Black students if they prefer to receive them. CAPS does not take into consideration that our psychic health is compromised due to systemic oppression (social, racial, economic, gender, etc.). These alternative counseling methods include: Black spirituality methods, Black counselors, and counselors of color.

### **Demand 4: Faculty Evaluations**

We demand that the faculty evaluations that each student is required to complete for each of their professors include at least two open-ended questions such as: 'Has this professor made any micro-aggressions towards you on account of your race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, and/or other identity?' and 'Do you think that this professor fits into the vision of Emory University being a community of care for individuals of all racial, gender, ability, and class identities?' These questions on the faculty evaluations would help to ensure that there are repercussions or sanctions for racist actions performed by professors. We demand that these questions be added to the faculty evaluations by the end of this semester, Fall 2015.

### **Demand 5: Academic Support**

Due to the historic and current systematic socioeconomic oppression of Black persons in America, we demand that Emory University institutionalize an academic support system for Black students. The history of limited educational attainment for Black students in America leads to the conclusion that not all Black students are adequately

prepared for the rigor of Emory University. This ill preparation is not due to lower intelligence than their other racial counterparts, however; it is due to the limited resources (e.g. inability to afford private tutors, having to use outdated textbooks in their public schools, etc.) that most Black students have had to use when attaining their primary and secondary education. Therefore, we demand an institutionalized academic support hub for Black students to have access to and to receive tutoring, specialized study skills, and career mentoring. Emory University has not created a program in place to aid Black students who are unprepared for the academic rigor of Emory's pre-professional academic track. In regards to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, The Center for Science Education along with the Hughes Undergraduate Excelling in Science (HUES) program will be shut down in December. The Multicultural Outreach and Resources at Emory (MORE) program has a limit on how many students can participate to receive the academic support and social mentorship of its program due to lack of funding allocated to OMPS. Therefore, we demand increased funding for the MORE program for Fall of 2016.

### **Demand 6: Student Involvement**

The Campus Life Compact which, yet again, came out of frustration with lack of response by administration to racialized experiences on campus and President Wagner's compromise comment asked for a program that "engage[d] the campus community in training, discussion, education, and promotion of the challenges faced by students of color on campus." One such diversity initiative that was implemented as a result of the Compact, Creating Emory, which has been ineffective in its execution of these pre-agreed goals. As a result, we demand that Black students and students/staff/faculty of color should be consulted when making any university-wide diversity initiatives. These diversity initiatives, including Social Justice Week by College Council and the like, have been surface level and even when the input of students of color is requested, their suggestions are still marginalized. Diversity initiatives should not be made from the standpoint of the dominant group (white men and women) or to ensure the comfort of the predominantly white student population at Emory. We demand that the purpose of these initiatives should be to ensure the comfort of the black student population at Emory and to enlighten white students about systematic oppression.

### **Demand 7: Recruitment, Compensation, Quality of Work Life**

Black staff, faculty, and administrators who advise Black organizations should receive an increase in their financial compensation or salaries. Changes should be made to the hierarchical structure of Campus Life which puts primarily white males at the top of the structure which lead to their increased compensation and salaries. Also, we demand an increase of Black staff, faculty, and administrators to be in higher positions of power so that they can implement the changes that black students wish to see in the university. We align ourselves with the letter/petition addressed to the Advisory Committee of The Board of Trustees and the Presidential Selection Committee signed by many members of the Emory University communities of color. The people who are currently in positions of power have done minimal or no work for Black students, therefore they are not

thoroughly knowledgeable about how to implement diversity initiatives that help Black students. Black/POC administrators and staff are overworked and underpaid, but they are the most influential on campus. The staff needs to be paid more for the work and time that they spend ensuring that the Black community has what it needs in the areas of administration, food, maintenance and custodial services, etc.

### **Demand 8: Job Security**

Black administrators are told to stand by racist and problematic faculty in order to preserve the positive image of the University to media and investors. However, the fact that these threats are made point to the job insecurity that Black faculty and administrators face at Emory University. We demand job security for Black faculty and administrators when they are earnestly working on behalf of Black students.

### **Demand 9: Conduct Policies and Student Org Funding**

Black student organizations are underfunded and over-policed. Forcing black organizations to collaborate with predominantly White organizations that are interested in surface level interactions and superficial celebrations of diversity is violent to the Black community at Emory University. Black student organizations are often told that their events are exclusive. These claims are unfounded because events are created specifically for Black students because they do not exist anywhere else on campus. Therefore, Black student organizations need more funding in order to help accomplish Emory University's mission to create a "community of care". Also, throughout Black organizations have been severely policed which has led to their expulsion from Emory University's campus for reasons that most organizations on campus are guilty of. We demand that there is a fair trial with a jury consisting of faculty, staff, and administrators of color, for each Black organization that may be suspended or expelled from campus. We also demand that there be a press release given to the entire Emory community (affiliates with emory.edu email addresses) after a Black organization is suspended or expelled from Emory University.

### **Demand 10: Faculty Recruitment and Retention**

Currently, Emory 6.8% of faculty at Emory are black. Most faculty of color are comprised of African American studies professors and lecturer/adjunct professors. The African American studies department has been a great resource to Black students, however, they too can be overextended with their various appointments in other departments. Other faculty of color are adjunct professors/lecturers, who do not have job security and are not valued in their positions in their departments. Thus, we need black professors in all disciplines, traditional and nontraditional. We demand that there be an increase in the amount of black and Latino full time, tenure-track professors to 10% by the year 2017 in other departments/disciplines besides the African American Studies department. We also demand that better records are kept of faculty and staff of color demographics and are easily accessible by the student body. These statistics of professor's ethnicity are important for increasing accountability. We also demand that

Black professors when in non-traditional or traditional disciplines must not be abused by the overwhelmingly white academy. Professors, too, need protection for the violent, racist and sexist incidents that they endure from their white colleagues in their departments.

### **Demand 11: Yik Yak**

Acknowledging foremost that all kinds of speech are not protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America which states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances," Emory University shall not protect the privilege of students to vocalize hate speech. The social app Yik Yak has been utilized on Emory's campus to post messages similar in sentiment to the following posts: "So Black people can complain about their f\*\*\*ing micro-aggressions and whatever but if I as a white person feel unsafe or uncomfortable for any reason, I'm ignorant. F\*\*\* that", "I'm about to \*\*\*\* \*\*\* to ebony porn to help race relations", and "Let's be real. Black lives matter is a sham. It's not because you're black. It's because you're selling crack and ran from a police officer." This is hate speech, which is defined by the American Bar Association as "speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits." Whereas, this fits the description of the aforementioned posts as it did to the Swastika painted on the fraternity house of Alpha Epsilon Pi (which was swiftly removed by the authorities), it is illogical for Emory to remain impartial in the matter at hand. On October 11th 2015, Emily Sacamoto was arrested on Emory's Oxford campus for posting "I'm shooting up the school. Tomorrow. Stay in your rooms. The ones on the quad are the ones who will go first." Though the federal Stored Communications Act (18 U.S.C. § 2701) prevents Yik Yak from disclosing the account information of a user without an official request from law enforcement, it is impermissible to allow racist students to terrorize Black people on any form of media and the anonymity that Yik Yak provides is a breeding ground for behavior of that sort. Hence, we demand that Emory University Information Technology Services formally request that Yik Yak, Inc. install a geofence covering the zip code 30322 in order to protect our students from subjection to intolerable and psychologically detrimental material.

### **Demand 12: GED Classes**

We demand that there be a student led GED program or opening Emory classes to black workers at Emory (DUC, Cliff, Maintenance). We would like for workers to take classes at Emory but understand that they have limited break time and other restrictions due to their demanding, undercompensated and under-rewarded labor. We, from our own observations, do not like the mistreatment and exploitation of DUC/Cox workers, who are also forced to endure extreme discomfort. We demand that there is better treatment of the DUC/Cox workers and more comfortable conditions for them to work under.

### **Demand 13: GER Requirement**

Emory University does not currently have a General Education Requirement that focuses specifically on the histories and experiences of people of color. The Campus Life Compact for Building an Inclusive Community at Emory (written Fall of 2012) states that the Office of the Provost and academic Deans will: 1) Consider creating a Global Citizenship & Diversity General Education Requirement and 2) Expand the range and quantity of course offerings specifically related to race relations, racism, ethnicity, etc.; encourage departments to make hires with these areas in mind whenever possible. This has not happened. Simply put, we demand that Emory University follow through on this recommendation and create a General Education Requirement for courses that explore issues significantly affecting people of color, and this course should be implemented in the fall of 2016.

To review the original document submitted to the institution, visit the link below.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KM\\_SDC4-QaQKXyl\\_DYUIDKRjN0DgLN0xVIn986Lunl/mobilebasic?pli=1&viewopt=127](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KM_SDC4-QaQKXyl_DYUIDKRjN0DgLN0xVIn986Lunl/mobilebasic?pli=1&viewopt=127)

### **POST RACIAL JUSTICE RETREAT (2016) ACTIONS**

The university has established the Emory Commission on Racial and Social Justice, which replaced the Next Steps Working Group formed at last year's retreat. The inaugural meeting of the Commission was held on Tuesday, June 21, 2016. The Commission serves as an oversight and accountability body that helps ensure a continued focus on diversity and inclusion at Emory. It is comprised of an Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Social Justice Process Owners.

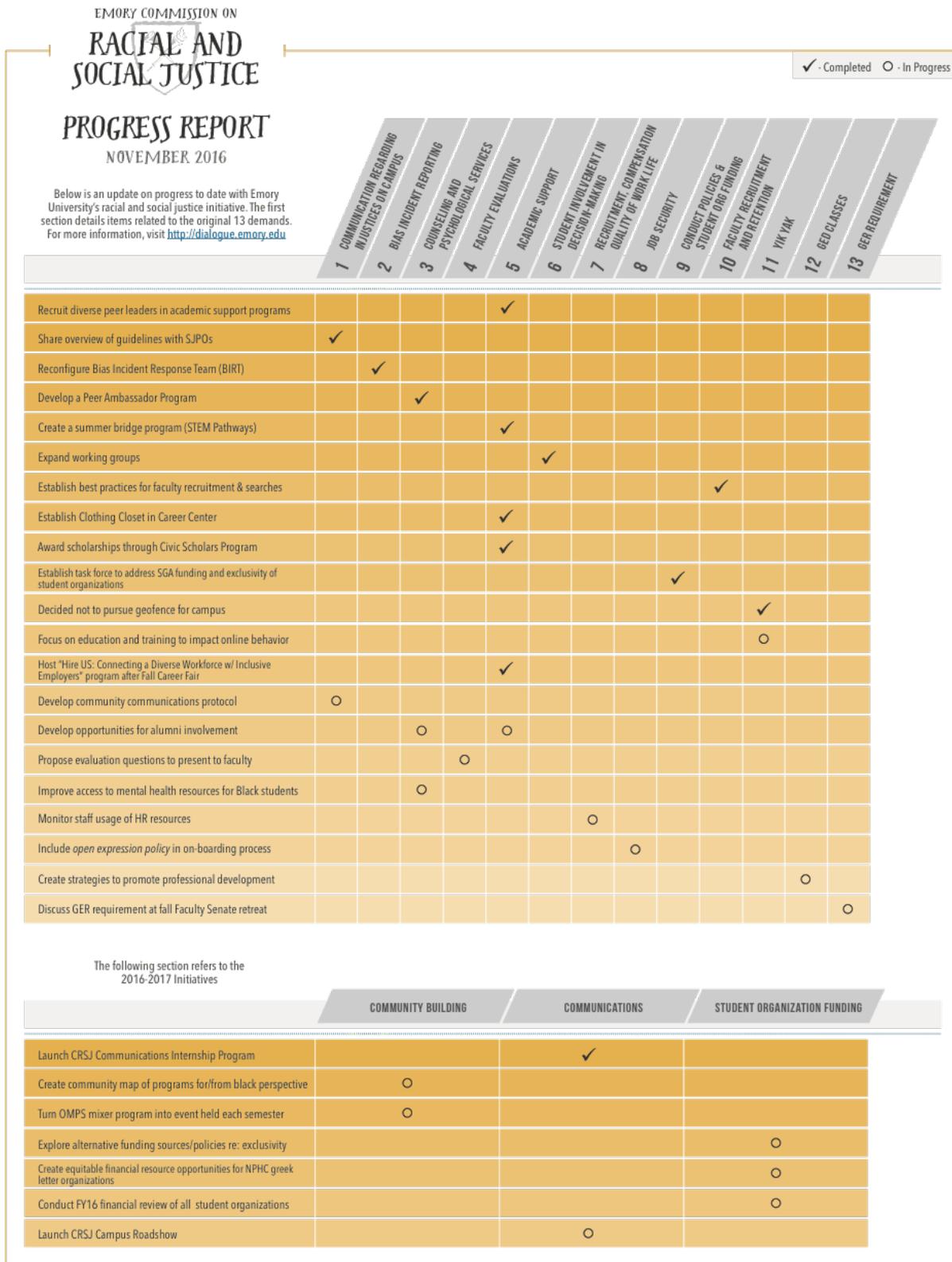
The Executive Committee, which includes the President, members of the President's Cabinet, and designated student representatives, creates the university's vision on racial and social justice that guides the work of the commission and serves as a final point of accountability for timeline, structure, and outcomes.

The Steering Committee identifies and selects Social Justice Process Owners (SJPOs) to develop strategies and tactics that meet our social and racial justice goals. The committee also serves as a body to provide counsel and advocacy, and reports on our progress in achieving Emory's racial and social justice goals.

The Social Justice Process Owners develop and advance strategies to achieve racial and social justice outcomes, and assess and report progress and overall impact of strategies. They also support continued integration of racial and social justice strategies into day-to-day operations that support progress toward outcomes.

Together, these entities have begun the process of working on issues raised through the 13 demands. As a result, in addition to the demands, new initiatives have emerged

that are critical to the process of building a racially and socially just community at Emory. Below is a chart that highlights these efforts.



## **CLOSING**

This year's Racial Justice Retreat will provide a forum to discuss actions to date in response to the 13 demands, share other diversity and inclusion initiatives happening across the institution for feedback and highlight ways to engage with the Commission. The format will allow for an interactive and dynamic experience that connects students, faculty and staff, who are committed to diversity and inclusion at Emory.

Discussion notes, actions taken, meeting agendas, minutes and notes can be reviewed in detail at [http://dialogue.emory.edu/racial\\_justice/demands/index.html](http://dialogue.emory.edu/racial_justice/demands/index.html).