



BROWN

June 7, 2020

To President Christina Paxson, the Brown Board of Trustees, Provost Richard M. Locke, Vice President for Campus Life Eric Estes, and the Brown University Community:

As graduate student workers of the Literary Arts department, we (the undersigned) write in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, in which many organizations and individuals have been calling for the abolition of police, prisons, and all other institutions that inflict continuous violence on Black people and block the flourishing of Black life. We grieve the losses of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, David McAtee, Ahmaud Arbery, Jamel Floyd, and all others murdered by police, vigilantes, and in prisons across this country. We also stand in support of the families and loved ones of those murdered and otherwise living with the traumatic effects of state-sanctioned-and-inflicted terror. This terror goes beyond the murder of individual Black people. It is embedded into the full weave of the aforementioned institutions. It is not enough to call for the firings or imprisonment of “bad cops” and it is not enough to call for reform. We must call for, imagine, and remember a world beyond this one. We must enact the end of a world in which antiblackness is possible.

Echoing and adding to the demands of graduate student workers across the university, in line with fellow writers and cultural workers across the country, and following the lead of Black organizers, we make the following demands of Brown:

1. As it is not within our power to have Warren Kanders '79, the CEO of Safariland, step down from his job or dismantle his company, **we demand that Brown University cut all ties with him.** Safariland is a supplier of teargas that is being deployed against protestors and others in the U.S. and around the world,⁴ including those fighting for justice right now – a violation of human rights that is banned in warfare by the 1925 Geneva Protocol.
2. **We demand that Brown sever all ties with the Providence police department.** Make Brown's campus a police-free zone.
3. **We demand that Brown University disarm its current police force.** Arming a police force with guns engenders more violence than it prevents, and disproportionately endangers and traumatizes Black students and other students of color, as well as nonwhite Providence residents. There have been numerous instances across the US where campus police forces have shot and killed innocent students and civilians. Brown students have advocated for years to disarm campus police.

4. We further call on Brown to abolish the Department of Public Safety. There are many models for working with Black residents and other residents of color in Providence and members of the Brown community to establish networks that prioritize community-based response and community wellness. Rather than promote and normalize a culture of police violence, Brown University must support and model non-police community-based responses to safety and wellness issues on campus. As a reparative act, Brown University should redirect funds from the Department of Public Safety to invest in the health and wellbeing of Black students and community members. This includes the termination of programs such as Coffee with a Cop, Cooking with Cops, Cocoa with BroPo, and Pizza with the Chief to aid in the funding of community-led alternatives to policing. Given the university's presence as a gentrifying force in the city, the funds deallocated from DPS should be redirected to support community organizing, collective healing, and reparations in the form of a fund for Black Providence residents displaced by the university.

5. We demand that Brown University pledge to permanently reject any future participation in the 1033 Program, which allows the Department of Defense to funnel military-grade weaponry to local law enforcement agencies. Beyond formal participation in this program, there are other means of acquiring militarized equipment such as tear gas, riot gear, armored vehicles, etc. We ask that Brown disclose any current such holdings to all Brown community members and commit to not acquiring such equipment in the future.

6. We demand that Brown University improve its treatment of Black faculty, contingent faculty, and staff. Brown must strengthen its efforts to recruit and retain Black faculty. The university must also halt its hiring freeze and hire contingent faculty full-time. The freeze, as well as the failure to renew contingent faculty's contracts, disproportionately affects scholars of color, on whose backs the university's diversity initiatives are staged, but whose precarious structural position prevents them from enacting fundamental institutional change. Finally, the university must protect the rights of custodial and other staff, who are drawn especially from Black and Brown immigrant communities and who deserve hazard pay, fair hours, and protection against wage theft and when campus reopens. The university must also provide protection against wage theft and sudden termination of assignments for non-regular workers who've relied on income from Brown for years.

We write this statement with full awareness of Brown's position of privilege, and our privileges as students and instructors within this institution. We also write this with an understanding of the ways that Brown has benefitted from chattel slavery and settler colonialism. It is imperative that the present university work swiftly and carefully to make amends for that legacy, and to join other institutions like the University of Minnesota in setting precedence for a campus that values Black life and true safety.

As writers, as students, and as teachers, we strive to see the world as it is, to move through it strangely, and to make it known it could be otherwise. We are not always perfect in our attempts, but we are taking this opportunity to make our commitments to each other and our broader communities clear. We call on the university to put weight behind its words and bring our demands to fruition.

These are statements that should go without needing to be said: Black lives matter and Black life matters.
Defund the police and invest in Black futures and present wellbeing.

In solidarity,

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Stine An
Helen Armstrong
Theo Ellin Bellew
Tessa Bolsover
Murphy Chang
S.A. Chavarria
Jennifer Chukwu
Abra Conn
Claire Crews
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Jordan Jace
Imani Elizabeth Jackson
Shingai Kagunda
Catherine Kim
Lazuli Liu
Sean McCoy
John Moran
Kendall Morris
Chibuihe Obi
Chante Reid
Lucia Retta
Gabriel Oladipo

Mariana Roa Oliva
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Jo Stewart
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