

Statement from the Florida Anthropology Student Association:

First and foremost, we express that Black lives matter, and stand in solidarity with the Black community—especially our Black graduate students. We stand against the acts of police violence, the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade (and many others), and excessive force shown by the police and military during the ongoing protests. Furthermore, we stand against racism and oppression—both institutionalized and overt—and are committed to challenging their harmful impacts both in our department and broadly beyond the realm of academia.

As anthropologists, we sit at “the intersection of the multiple approaches to the study of humankind” (UF Anthropology Website 2020). We have made people the focus of our research, and to not engage with these discussions surrounding the detrimental and systemic impact of racism on the human experience is irresponsible and unethical. Anthropology, the social sciences, higher education, and academia as a whole are inherently political. Therefore, we must take a stand. While academia may simply be viewed as a workplace by some, we cannot ignore that the University of Florida and our department specifically serve as focal points for the production and distribution of knowledge in a field that explicitly focuses on the human experience. Therefore, silence around these issues has lasting implications that only serve to further perpetuate racial disparities in both the Department of Anthropology and the field of anthropology itself.

Furthermore, we recognize that we cannot make a statement without turning a critical lens on ourselves. The very foundations of anthropology—regardless of subdiscipline—are rooted in the colonial project. Anthropology has historically used the tools of the discipline to institute and/or perpetuate the systematic oppression and marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color throughout the world. The methods and theories that continue in our scholarship and literature today were often developed at the expense of Black people, not only within the United States but also beyond our borders. We cannot ignore that biological anthropology has historically “been complicit in producing and reifying racist ideologies via the misuse, falsification, or biased production of scientific information.” (American Association of Physical Anthropology). We cannot ignore that archaeology fundamentally relies on outsiders entering foreign communities in order to play leading roles in knowledge production. We cannot ignore the harmful role of ethnography, the reasons why it was developed, and the ways in which early ethnography continues to harm communities of color today.

It is not enough to make a statement. Equity, inclusion, and diversity are continuous efforts that require concrete, continuous action. FASA asks that our department, and anthropologists broadly, consider the following (non-exhaustive) measures:

- Conduct a climate survey, with explicit intention of understanding the role of diversity within the UF Department of Anthropology. Specifically, the administration should highlight the makeup of minority voices, particularly Black voices, in the department. The results should be disseminated widely amongst faculty, staff, and students.
- Disseminate a comprehensive statement addressing the lack of Black faculty in the department, including steps that the department has taken and will take to increase diversity not just in recruitment practices but in hiring practices and retention as well.
- Outline a comprehensive plan to address structural change within the department itself, independent of diversifying through hiring practices. It is not enough to just bring Black anthropologists to the department if we are not welcoming them into a truly open and inclusive space. To ask them to perform the labor of diversifying the department is not a true movement towards equity and inclusion.

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Concrete steps, continued:

- Outline a comprehensive plan to increase diversity in recruitment AND retention of non-White graduate students, in particular Black graduate students. Black representation in the graduate student body is not proportionate to the number of Black people in the United States, nor proportional to the number of Black students at UF.
- Suggest all instructors in the department to restructure their syllabi, with the intention of critically evaluating the extent to which they include non-white authors in their courses and make changes to their syllabus to include more BIPOC in order to elevate their contributions to the discipline.
- No longer require the GRE as part of the graduate admissions process, with the acknowledgement that the SAT was initially implemented by the Army in the 1910s to identify recruits with "superior mental capabilities." Its implementation, and the development of subsequent standardized tests have historically kept Black students out of higher education, and continue to perpetuate institutionalized inequality.
- Establish a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee that includes representatives from the staff, Faculty, Graduate Students, Undergraduates, and other groups that are part of the UF Anthropology department to advocate for the promotion of diversity.
- Provide mandatory and recurring diversity and inclusion trainings for all anthropology instructors in the department. This includes giving instructors the resources to be competent mentors to BIPOC students and students from other marginalized groups (e.g. First Generation/Low-Income students).
- Provide a statement and recurring training regarding citations and literature in academia. Citations are inherently political, as they specifically endorse who is allowed to contribute to the production of knowledge in anthropology. Such training would encourage a critical review of best citation practices, and how to use citations as a concrete way to be inclusive when producing academic work.

These actions are far from providing a solution but are some concrete steps that UF Anthropology can take in order to truly demonstrate that they are committed to continued, sustained action and structural change. As FASA represents the UF Anthropology graduate student body, we are willing to work with the department in collaborating on any of the points listed but recognize that these directives can only be executed by the UF Anthropology administration and faculty.

The FASA Board, 2019-2020

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