

#AnthrosForEquity

An open letter to the University of North Texas Anthropology Department,

Thank you for acknowledging and calling out the systemic racism and inequalities we see against our Black, Indigenous + POC (BIPOC) friends and peers in our nation, our community, and our university. We, as applied anthropologists and activists, know how important of a step that is in the process of change. We appreciate the sentiment and want to take this time to move beyond sentiment and into material action. Below are the steps that are needed to start change in our own academic space.

It is easy for us to look outside and critique “others,” but it is harder to practice reflexivity and look inward and critique ourselves. As anthropologists, we know how the leaky pipeline can leave BIPOC professors and students in academia behind. We know how important it is to see yourself reflected in the department’s faculty and staff. We know friends, peers, and strangers that have been bypassed or mistreated due to institutional barriers within our own academic home.

We can and should do better. We demand better.

Here are the next steps required from the Anthropology Department at University of North Texas.



Lobby for defunding the university police and to create alternatives to policing on campus.

For 2020, the police budget for UNT is \$5.3 million. The UNT Police Department receives 7x more funding than the Multicultural Center, Pride Alliance, Office of Equal Opportunity, Equity and Diversity, and Diversity and Inclusion combined. Identity based organizations receive no guaranteed funding. We demand that the department collectively engage during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond in formal lobbying to the Dean and higher levels of administration within the University to: defund the university’s police, establish non-police alternatives for non-violent calls and calls involving people with mental illness or a drug-induced crisis, and for a police oversight board that includes a majority BIPOC students, faculty, and staff. Advocate for less punitive, more constructive, and reformist approaches to resolving non-violent drug possession. Lobby to protect students from drug convictions to ensure that they remain eligible for financial aid. Advocate that UNT embraces reality-based drug education centered on harm reduction, along with providing services like Narcan distribution for free on campus.



Lobby the UNT Administration to declare UNT a Freedom City.

We demand that the department collectively lobby the UNT administration to declare the university a Freedom City during the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond. UNT should not honor any U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention requests. We also demand that all faculty and staff of the Department of Anthropology participate in the Eagle Dreamer training program and advertise it to students



Improve the hiring and recruiting process of faculty candidates.

We demand full transparency about our department’s hiring process and methods. We demand a process and strategy with transparent metrics for hiring and attracting BIPOC candidates, especially Black anthropologists. There are many networks the department should tap into for recruitment of BIPOC candidates, such as the Association of Black Anthropologists and other BIPOC led groups within the AAA and SfAA. Actively work to dismantle biased recruiting and hiring of candidates by reviewing language in job descriptions and include a diversity statement that encourages BIPOC and diverse gender-identifying persons to apply to jobs within the department. Hiring committees should be diverse and always include BIPOC representation to ensure candidates are given fair and ample opportunity.



Support current BIPOC faculty equitably.

We demand that the department support current and incoming BIPOC faculty equitably. We demand that white faculty and department administration recognize that BIPOC faculty members live the racism that is deconstructed and theorized about in the classroom. Do not elevate “exotic,” international, or urban work over the critical work done in spaces closer to home by BIPOC faculty. This lived experience of BIPOC is an asset to the anthropology department, but does not mean that the labor, interdisciplinary work, and activism surrounding racial issues and pedagogy about critical race should be disproportionately asked of, or be the responsibility of BIPOC faculty. We see that BIPOC take on a disproportionate amount of this work and we demand that the department recognize and value the labor of BIPOC faculty and staff by providing formal avenues for documenting and recognizing their work. Part of this recognition demands that the department acknowledge the labor and expertise of BIPOC faculty when accomplishments of the department are presented to UNT administration, communities of practice, and the public. This often invisible labor should be rewarded in material ways, such as promotions and annual reviews. Lastly, we demand that the department do a thorough review of salary equity, especially considering the unaccounted work that BIPOC faculty take on, and make adjustments to salary. We want to see structured policy about how the department is actively addressing these issues.



Recruitment of BIPOC students.

We demand to hear formalized strategies to recruit more BIPOC students, especially women. There should be more resources made available to support minority students, especially online students, as they go through the program. No one BIPOC professor should be expected to “shoulder the burden” of advising all BIPOC students.



Provide anti-racist training.

We demand yearly anti-racist training made available for free to all professors, staff, and students in the department and required at least once for all new and existing faculty and staff, starting in the academic year 2020–2021. Professors of out-sourced classes such as Physical Anthropology and Archaeology should also be required to attend. While we are aware there is anti-racist training at the university level, we demand that the department host their own “unworking racism” training. This work should not fall to the department’s faculty or staff, but to educators that are trained in providing anti-racist and decolonizing workshops. The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond is a well-known and respected organization that offers Undoing Racism training and should be considered.



Intentional conversations around race and racism.

We demand continuous intentional, structured, and formal conversations, starting in Fall 2020, about racial equity issues in the department between professors, staff, and students.



Proactively support BIPOC students.

We demand that you proactively foster an environment where BIPOC students can be comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of retaliation. Students who vocalize disaffection due to race, ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ identity, or gender should not have their standing, funding, recommendations or any other form of support altered in any way from the department or its faculty. The department should seek out and share information about spaces where BIPOC students can speak about their shared experience, including on-campus networks and farther reaching professional networks of BIPOC anthropologists. The department should be prepared to support BIPOC students (including online students) after graduation through the aforementioned networks of BIPOC anthropologists, by connecting BIPOC students with organizations seeking job candidates, and/or providing letters of recommendations for job seeking.



Revise theory and syllabi.

We demand the syllabi for all graduate courses, especially “Anthropological Thought and Praxis I”, “Anthropological Thought and Praxis II”, and the undergraduate course “Development of Anthropological Thought” be reviewed and adjusted to include more BIPOC theorists immediately

for Fall 2020 courses and beyond. Courses should devote more time to race and critical race theories in coursework along with structuralism, political economy, postmodernism, and Marxist theories that we are taught. An absence of BIPOC theorists from these courses sends the message that BIPOC pedagogy is not important, that these scholars have nothing to contribute, and that BIPOC students are not welcome in the discipline. The current course structures perpetuate the belief that the contributions of non-whites do not matter, and miss out on their incredibly colorful, important, and powerful perspectives. Professors should also revise works cited within presentations and within class discussions. There needs to be an extensive effort to ensure students are aware of how anthropologists have influenced the communities they interact with, how their work has affected many other marginalized communities, and how the legacy of their work continues to affect marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC ones. Since many of the works in the traditional anthropological canon are derogatory towards the identities of marginalized students and often frame BIPOC as incapable, unintelligent, or “savage,” this can be mentally difficult for students who already face the pressure of proving their worth in an institution which does not value BIPOC perspectives and contributions. When teaching the traditional canon, the department must accordingly ensure students have proper access to mental health resources in and outside of the university.



Invite BIPOC speakers.

Include BIPOC anthropologists and researchers in at least 50% of class and departmental events that involve guest speakers, starting in the 2020–2021 academic year and continuing after, to create space for the voices of BIPOC to discuss their work instead of limiting it to white experiences. This metric should be tracked by a member of UNT Anthropology administration and made available annually or at the request of any faculty member, staff, or student.



Build partnerships with BIPOC owned organizations.

We demand to see faculty facilitating intentional and proactive conversations with BIPOC organizations to form partnerships for the applied thesis. We demand that the department create a contact list of organizations that UNT anthropology has partnership with and would benefit from student-led research. This list should be created by the end of Fall 2020. At least 50% of the organizations on this list should be BIPOC-owned by the end of calendar year 2021.



Formalize the reporting of racism and other inappropriate behavior by faculty members and students.

We demand the creation of an actionable process for inappropriate, toxic, and racist behavior from both students and/or faculty with student oversight, as decided by students, by the closing of Fall semester 2020.



Collect feedback about the student experience and satisfaction with the department and its program. Include students in the department’s strategic planning.

We demand the department annually collect anonymous feedback from current and recently graduated students in order to allow space for feedback, starting in the 2020–2021 academic year. The data, findings, and planned action stemming from the results of the most recent evaluation project completed in Dr. Squires course should be shared with all current faculty, staff, and students by the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. In the vein of participatory research, collectively strategize with students and faculty on ways to address whatever opportunities for improvement come out of the data from the most recent evaluation and subsequent annual evaluations. Trend data over time and, in the interest of transparency, make all data publicly available to current and prospective students, staff, and faculty. We demand that students be included in the department’s strategic planning process and subsequent decisions. Students’ who participate should be selected by students through a democratic process.

We are here to support our Black, Indigenous + POC friends and peers. We also understand that Black people have often been sidelined, even within spaces meant for People of Color. Additionally, colorism cannot be ignored: light-skinned Black people and POCs are given the space to speak more often than dark-skinned people. Dark-skinned Blacks deserve to take up just as much space and have their thoughts and ideas

heard. We must acknowledge the intersectionality at play when discussing ways in which Black folks have been systematically oppressed by other oppressed groups. When we demand change for BIPOC people in our academic home, we demand equitable representation be given to Black voices, alongside Indigenous and People of Color.

The statement from the department reads, “We believe that Black lives matter, and we support efforts to build a more inclusive society.” To that end, we need to see real material effort and change within our own department.

Sincerely,

Allyson Cornett, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2014

Patricia Urdzik, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2014

Jenny Hooker, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2015

Aaron Van Valen, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2016

Beth Holland, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2016

Brittany LeMay, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2016

Gabby Rocha, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2016

Kenneth Saintonge, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2016

Claire Deahl, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2017

Dazore A. Bradford, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2017

Emma Carnes, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2017

Kathryn Jimenez, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2017

Autumn D. McDonald, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Brynn Torres, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Janice Byth, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Jessica N. Keller, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Kayla Davis, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Ky Burke, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Sarah Stutts, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Shannon Cronin, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Tristan Seikel, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2018

Edwina Sunny, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2019

James C Goebel, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2019

Nick Jordan, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2019

Kelly Partin, Current Graduate Student, Cohort of 2020

Ayla Walker, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2020

LaTasya Booker, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2020

Lindsay Musil, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2020

Adam Rutledge, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2021

Anthony DeFreece, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2021

Brennan Moore, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2021

Lee Olinger, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2021

Serlesi Olguin, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2023

Victoria Thomasson, Current Undergraduate Student, Class of 2023

Joshua Liggett, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2012

Jessica MacKinnon, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2012

Lisa Quirk Kiesow, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2012

Miranda Andrade Gonzalez, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2012

Shane Pahl, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2012

Alexander Cutler, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Amanda Whatley, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Briana Payne, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Christopher Ferrell, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Elizabeth Sidler, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Hira Hasan, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Jacqueline Cortez, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Molly Beyer, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Molly Rempe, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Natalie Morrissey, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Shelly Barnes, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2013

Alex Bishop, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

Beverly Otworl, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

Heather Roth, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

John Sarmiento, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

Stephen Gonzalez, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

Tyler Brickle, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2014

Ana Belen Conrado, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2015

Connor McCabe, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2015

Lindsey Robertson, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2015

Minakshi Das, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2015

Ryan Kober, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2015

Andie Semlow, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Ashley Thomas, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Gabrielle Lukins, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Kelly McFarland, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Kim Kieseewetter, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Madeline Fink, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Skye O'Neill, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2016

Brittney Sanderson, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2017

Kelley Lokensgard, Graduate Student Alumni, Cohort of 2018

Eamon Danzig, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2011

Corey Troiani, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2012

Lainne Schendel, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2013

Ramon Resendiz, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2014

Meghan Kajihara, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2016

Sarah Ben-Ezra, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2017

Bethany Trent, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2019

Rose Benton, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2019

Kris Travis, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2020

Nikki Hicks, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2020

Sarah Richardson, Undergraduate Student Alumni, Class of 2020

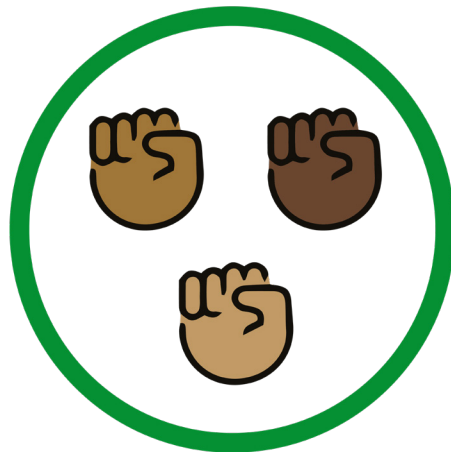
Emily Sawey, Undergraduate Student Alumni

Lacy Hulen, Undergraduate Student Alumni

Rene Zazueta, Undergraduate Student Alumni

April Bass, Friend and Ally of the UNT Anthropology Department

Signatures Last Updated on June 12, 2020



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