

## An Open Letter to Dean Martinez and SLS Faculty:

Only two years ago, in response to various incidents of racism at Stanford Law School, students began the Racism Lives Here Too (RLHT) movement. Hundreds of our fellow alumni supported RLHT and expected real change at SLS. We were outraged to hear that despite this initiative, on May 27th, 2020, Professor McConnell chose to say the n-word during a virtual class. This incident was the latest example of SLS faculty claiming to act “in good faith” when making mistakes they could have avoided simply by listening to students of color speak their truths about their experiences. We understand that Professor McConnell has committed to doing better, and that the SLS community has committed to holding him to his word. We do not doubt the sincerity of these commitments. But we never should have gotten to this point. Thus, as this new school year begins at SLS, we believe it is important to address some issues.

Generations of Black and other students of color have spoken out time and again, advocating for their dignity and for the meaningful incorporation of race into the curriculum to properly prepare all SLS students for their professions. The administration and faculty have long shirked accountability for the culture of the school as a whole.

The lack of accountability is abundantly clear to us as alumni, because racism was omnipresent during our time at SLS as well. We saw structural racism embedded in the composition of the student body; the majority-white faculty that is significantly less diverse than even the student body; and the cases and texts, overwhelmingly written by white men, that generally treat race and racism as niche issues, if they are discussed at all. We also saw individual racism, woven into the fabric of courses where students of color were expected to speak for their entire race in class discussions; had to rebut racist comments by peers and professors, without the support of, or sometimes in opposition to the wishes of, professors; or were consistently mistaken for someone else of the same race by professors.

In the past years, SLS has had numerous opportunities to demonstrate a genuine investment in its students of color, first-generation, and low-income students. In 2001, BLSA representatives called for the SLS administration to act. Concrete student demands were issued in 2015 by a coalition of students and then again in 2018 by both RLHT and BLSA. While administrations change, these most recent movements documented nearly two decades' worth of duplicated efforts and known, solvable problems, many of which remain unsolved. We therefore fully support BLSA's June 1, 2020 demands for racial equity at SLS and join in their demands for tangible, concrete action to address racism at Stanford Law School (attached herein).

Specifically, we urge the SLS Administration and faculty to take the following actions, many of which we - and students before us - have requested for years:

1. **Hire** more tenured or tenure-track Black faculty. We consider it unacceptable that SLS still only has four active Black tenured faculty members. Even more egregious is that SLS has never had a tenured Black female professor in its entire history as an institution.
2. **Address** socio-economic inequity within Stanford's policies that disproportionately affect Black students (e.g., summer income contributions), harm students from diverse backgrounds throughout their time at SLS, and contribute to limiting the career options many SLS graduates are able to pursue.
3. **Require** a course on race and its intersections with the law as a prerequisite for graduation.
4. **Establish** a Racial Justice Clinic complete with written plans for its implementation that describe how money will be allocated to the clinic.

Further, we urge SLS to develop a holistic action plan with metrics to address issues of racial equity at the school, including the issues outlined above and in the past by students and alumni. **We also formally request that SLS provide a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion update to all alumni on its progress regarding this action plan at least twice a year.** As alumni, we have a vested interest in seeing progress on these issues and in holding the school accountable.

We acknowledge and appreciate the response by SLS and certain faculty to incidents at the school and the civil unrest in America. We also appreciate the openness with which Dean Martinez and the Administration have engaged with concerned alumni and the work ahead. It gives us hope for what SLS can become. It is imperative that SLS creates an intellectual space at the school and beyond for discussions of race and the law in America, similar to what exists for discussions of law and economics, or law and technology. **Race or racism is not a peripheral anecdote in the American story. It is one of the central stories.**

As SLS alumni, we want to make clear that we will carefully consider future contributions of our time and money to this institution against the backdrop of the school's response to this letter and corresponding ongoing actions (or lack thereof) to address racism at Stanford, in the local community, and throughout the nation by extension. We are optimistic that, moving forward, SLS will embrace progress, accountability, and transparency so that the school may finally provide **all** of its students the education they deserve. We hope that Stanford Law School will become a national leader on issues of race and the law. We also hope that we can be proud of how SLS responds to this moment, at the school and in our nation.

In solidarity,

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