

Africana Studies Program Statement — November 13, 2020

Dear Bryn Mawr Community,

In celebration of the successful strike organized by Black Students Refusing Further Inaction, the Women of Color House, and the Black Student League at Haverford College, and the on-going strike organized by The Core Bryn Mawr Strike Collective in collaboration with Sisterhood, Bryn Mawr's African and Caribbean Students Organization (BACaSO), Mujeres*, Zami+, and Mawrters for Immigrant Justice, the Africana Studies Program is inspired. Our multivocality coalesces into unanimous support of and solidarity with the demands brought forth, respecting the multiplicity of perspectives within the Steering Committee on achieving these goals.

We recognize that people of color, particularly those who are Black and/or Indigenous, have had to fight the same fights within the institution as they have outside, regarding anti-Black racism, equity, acknowledgment, and inclusion. The College has benefitted from the appearance of increased diversity without establishing processes and practices to ensure an inclusive environment, continuing the marginalization of students, staff, faculty, and even academic programs. The Africana Studies Program supports the students' expression of the need to move the College forward, and we acknowledge students' bravery in refusing to accept the status quo. We are reminded that even the foundation of the Africana Studies program was brought about by avid student advocacy, in concert with faculty participation, to motivate institutional acquiescence. Continuing longstanding actions of student leadership within the bi-college consortium, the Africana Studies Program envisions our future as: leading anti-racist thought, action, and education on campus; and holding space for criticality, challenging power structures, engaging multiple perspectives, and developing awareness and tools for liberation. Students are enacting these tenets in this very moment.

As a program, we are working diligently, in collaboration with student consultants, supported by the Teaching and Learning Institute, and student Africana Ambassadors, to strengthen the existing infrastructure of Africana Studies. The program appreciates being considered in June's [open letter to the bi-college community](#), and we take seriously the positive impact that our courses have had on students, and the responsibility of further growth required to develop a major. During the Fall 2020 semester, we: have structured a process for vetting courses; are proposing a tenure-track position to the Committee on Academic Priorities; are improving advising processes; are working toward building community; and are formalizing and building institutional memory. Within the College, we are arduously advocating for an increased budget for Africana Studies to support the processes described above, and more. We implore the College to cease holding up Africana Studies to imply forward movement and investment to justice, equity, and anti-racism, without the institutional resources to achieve these ends.

Africana Studies prides itself on being an interdisciplinary program, offering students the ability to explore Africana and Diasporic study through a wide range of perspectives. We encourage our core and affiliated faculty and staff colleagues to support student leadership in these times of great opportunity. We encourage students interested in Africana and Diasporic study to seek out opportunities for deep learning and strong community building, and to continue freedom dreaming, with liberation in mind.

Sincerely,

Chanelle Wilson, Chair, Africana Studies