

To the Emerson College community:

We are tired. We are tired of being asked about our opinions and not being listened to. We are tired of being exploited for our emotional and intellectual labor. We are tired of hearing about our Peers of Color being traumatized and gaslit. We are tired of being told that there is change, but not seeing or feeling it. We are tired of the lack of transparency. We are tired of administration going through the motions. We are tired of being told to wait. We are tired of watching our peers lose their excitement, motivation, and hope for their future at this university.

This past summer, numerous Black, Indigenous and People of Color enrolled as students at Emerson College attended three meetings with administrative staff ("the administration") to share their concerns about the college's treatment towards Students of Color; this only happened after being pressured by numerous students who felt that the college had been invalidating their experiences. The administration claimed that these meetings were open to all Students of Color but had advertised them to the student body minimally. They also held these meetings in parallel with RA Training (note: many Student leaders of Color are also RAs). Whenever We would raise our concerns to them, they would respond defensively and with excuses. They listed several ways the college was already working to "address" our concerns, as if to pat themselves on their backs for efforts that were ultimately unproductive.

On August 26, 2020, we attended the 3rd BIPOC meeting with the hope of hearing concrete action steps that the administration would take to acknowledge the issues We deal with on a day to day basis. They told us they would discuss amongst themselves and "follow up" shortly.

As they "brainstormed," Students of Color have had to fend for themselves and maintain their ability to learn in an increasingly hostile environment. Despite a summer of pledges for change, email and social media statements, and supposed antiracism education, We continue to hear about atrocious and deeply upsetting interactions with faculty, staff and fellow students. One major incidents was the series of Zoom Bombings that interrupted meetings of intercultural organizations. On October 9, 2020, the dean of campus life sent out an email to members of the Emerson community, stating, "In the midst of gatherings that should serve as safe spaces, they have been subjected to threats, personal attacks, racist language, and bigotry. Needless to say, these incidents are absolutely unacceptable and deeply troubling. Such hateful behavior will not be tolerated." With the barrage of emails received from administration on a daily basis, one would think we would also receive regular communications about identity-based harassment of student organizations. However, Emerson administration has fallen short, leaving students in the dark and student leaders hurt and distrustful. Along with that, there were countless marches in memoriam of Breonna Taylor and to peacefully protest police brutality. With these events forthcoming, the administration sent out an email urging students to stay safe and contact Emerson College Police Department (ECPD) in case of emergencies, once again providing only empty words, without showing any true awareness or concern for the heart of the movements they claim to be in support of.

On October 29, 2020, administration invited the summer committee participants to a meeting to discuss their planned responses to our concerns. This was a 2-hour meeting that did not truly respond to our struggles. While we acknowledge the effort staff and admin put into thinking of changes to improve the wellbeing of BISOC on Emerson's campus, most changes proposed were surface level solutions, to what is a deeper and complex set of issues. Additionally, many of them were long term goals as opposed to answering the immediate pain among the community. The burden of outreach to the BISOC community was shifted to specific community leaders. This is only one example of administration not being cognizant of BISOC's time and adding to our (again, unpaid) labor. There's strength for us in numbers, and a way to reduce the potential for gaslighting and power imbalances is at the minimum to make sure a decent amount of students of color can actually attend these meetings that will directly impact their present and future experiences. While students are expected to reproduce trauma in great detail in order for administration to properly address them, this same detail is never included in the solutions administration claims to be putting into action. If we are to be transparent about our needs, the way these needs are being met must be transparent and logically structured. For example, how will it be ensured that diverse affiliated faculty will stay at Emerson, instead of being pushed out? It is not just that Emerson is lacking in hiring faculty of color; Emerson has a problem with getting faculty of color to stay due to a hostile work environment. Additionally, Faculty of color have had to fight in the past for tenure. What is being done to review the tenure selection process, to remove biases and other roadblocks?

We know students of color before us have been doing this work, however for students who have been here since 2017 haven't seen tangible change other than the SOC Pre-Orientation. "Long term plans" aren't guaranteed to be carried out, and how can we trust administration to continue the work after all of us have graduated? We do not want the students coming after us to feel the way we feel or to be writing a similar statement.

We cannot continue to drag our feet in cyclical conversations without addressing the root of our problems. Students of Color have felt isolated at this institution for years, and the administration has had years to address these same concerns. Countless times students have been told that "change is slow" and that they must wait a few years for things to get better. And yet, we continue to find ourselves in uncomfortable and even traumatic situations. Emerson is not alone in creating environments for their students such as this one, ones where students do not feel safe or secure in the way that they are receiving their education and by extension, their growth. However, with as much as Emerson touts being different from other institutions, it is disappointing to see that they are no different in this regard, that they choose not to stand out in the way they treat their students of color by lifting them up instead of pushing them out. We deserve better. There needs to be change, **now**, and we refuse to wait any longer.