

October 1st, 2020

To the UChicago campus community,

We write as members of the #EthnicStudiesNow campaign of UChicago United to express that we will not stand by the University's continued complacency and upholding of a carceral, racist-capitalist society. As students of color who experience, recognize, and confront the University's ideological and material violences toward Black and Brown communities here and abroad, in academic settings and beyond, we call for the creation of an alternative, anti-oppressive university rooted in self-determination, liberation, and revolutionary ways of knowing. **We are demanding the formation of a student and community-led Department for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) that challenges the foundations of the University itself—making possible what the University, in its white supremacist and capitalist language, renders impossible.**

The University does not protect us—they protect institutional property. They do not want to provide the knowledge that will help liberate us, but reinforce the values and principles of institutional oppression that deny us autonomy over our own education. We cannot stand by and pretend as though surface-level, band-aid initiatives like Diversity & Inclusion mean anything when they do not address the ways in which the University perpetuates violence on campus and beyond. We know this violence is at the core of the workings of the institution. We see it in the way they normalize and extol unforgiving academic standards and culture of stress and competition that alienates students from each other. We see it in the way they punish students who are struggling by suspending them, making it difficult to take leaves of absence, and increasing class loads. We see it in their racist private police force that guards wealth and overpolicing and displaces Black and Brown communities on the South Side. And ultimately, we see it in the very curriculum and structure of this school. This is why we want to make it explicit that when we say abolish the police, we also mean abolish the punitive, controlling, and alienating foundations of the University that indoctrinate us to police ourselves and each other. **Kill the cop in your head** that limits your imagination and perpetuates these violences—we must fight for education for liberation for all.

Oppressive education erases the lessons and knowledge of past freedom fighters and divorces us from our movement lineage. It imposes the illusion of isolation and hopelessness, demobilizing the movement for liberation. This is why we emphasize that we operate in the long lineage of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) and other radical, multiracial student coalitions of the 60s and 70s and demand #EthnicStudiesNow—because we know their demand for Ethnic Studies has always been a demand for student of color power, deeply rooted in the struggle for freedom for all. Building on their legacy, we envision the CRES Department as a first step toward transforming the University into a space that struggles against the role of higher education as the ideological backbone and complicit beneficiary of a racial capitalist, imperialist, colonial, heterosexist, carceral society. We are fighting for a CRES Department that will generate and nurture liberatory and anti-oppressive knowledge at the University, grounded in the values of self-determination and liberation. We are not simply asking to diversify the curriculum, faculty and staff hires, or student admissions at the proposed CRES Department or University at large. We demand radical changes that will fundamentally challenge the bureaucratic workings and institutional role of the University. **Betray the University—[join the movement and demand education for our liberation!](#)**

In solidarity,

#EthnicStudiesNow of UChicago United