

## Safer Spaces Resolution

**WHEREAS:** As “safer spaces” at MSU Denver, we, the Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy and the Africana and Chicana/o Studies Departments, must make clear that we stand against all forms of discrimination and oppression. We strive to offer environments where our students can learn free from harassment, threats, and violence. Declaring the Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy (GITA), and the Africana Studies and the Chicana/o Studies Departments as “safer spaces” magnifies our existing commitment to building a world we wish to inhabit: One that is equitable/egalitarian, where Black, Brown, and Indigenous lives are valued, and a world where white supremacy, settler colonialism, and other forms of systemic oppression have been dismantled.

**WHEREAS:** The history of state-sanctioned violence against Black, Brown and Indigenous individuals and their communities in the U.S. continues to intensify with shifts in the political landscape which have emboldened racists and produced a general climate of fear, anxiety, depression and anger for Black, Brown, and Indigenous individuals who are at an increased risk of racial profiling and police brutality. The recent murders of unarmed black individuals by police serve as a reminder that the history of state-sanctioned violence is deeply tied to racist ideologies and practices.

**WHEREAS:** Colorado is complicit in the history of state sanctioned violence in the rise of the KKK in the 1920s gaining control of the state legislature, the governor’s office, the Denver mayor’s office and the Denver police department, by exploiting local ethnic divisions through redlining and prejudice with its message of “100% Americanism,” a legacy that continues to be seen in the repeated violence against Black, Brown, and Indigenous people by the Denver Police Department.

**WHEREAS:** The Auraria campus and MSU Denver are further complicit in this history of state sanctioned violence in the City’s decision to support the Denver Urban Renewal Authority in displacing and uprooting an entire neighborhood of working-class Brown families in an effort to create Auraria campus, which includes Metropolitan State University of Denver, Community College of Denver, and University of Colorado at Denver.

**WHEREAS:** Denver has a long standing history of political organizing and direct action in defense and support for Black, Brown and Indigenous people, including but not limited to the Crusade for Justice and the West High School Blow Out of 1969 (an intersectional historic event), Colorado’s commitment to the United Farmworkers Movement, the deep history of Black organizing in 5 Points and the formation of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the formation and organizing of the American Indian Movement of Colorado in the struggle for land rights, as well as the 1944 National Congress of American Indians in the response to U.S. government termination and assimilation policies.

**WHEREAS:** The University remains one of the central spaces in our society to cultivate, promote and examine our world through critical thinking. The disciplines of Gender, Women and Sexualities Studies, Africana Studies and Chicana/o Studies have long studied, produced and disseminated knowledge on systems of oppression, the uplifting of Black communities across the African diaspora, and questioned histories of erasure, documenting our decolonial struggles. Our departments are not only responding to this current moment of social protest and uprisings, but are speaking up, deeply engaging with the grounding and foundation to our disciplines and the well-being of our communities and society.

**WHEREAS:** MSU Denver serves the largest population of undergraduate students of color (46%), the largest number of Pell grant eligible students, and the most ASSET students of all four-year institutions in the state. As such, MSU Denver provides critical educational resources and services to these communities. Yet, MSU Denver is among the lowest funded public universities in the State of Colorado.

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**WHEREAS:** MSU Denver students of color are expressing heightened fear and worry for themselves, and their friends, families, and communities. That we are entering a period of change and uncertainty, due to the COVID pandemic, only adds to the anxiety that our students are experiencing.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies commits to intervene when we witness racism and other forms of systemic oppression. We engage in critical pedagogies and dialogue with students, faculty, staff, and other campus visitors regarding anti-racism and anti-oppression in out of the classroom. We view education as a “practice of freedom” and liberation. We call out oppression and call in for dialogue and reparation.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies commits to show solidarity through action. We emotionally and financially support past, current, and future protests and protestors, acknowledging the diversity of tactics. We stand with those working to make critical change to systems of oppression and engage in this change in our own personal and professional lives.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies commits to stand against all forms of discrimination, oppression, and violence. We identify and renounce ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized oppression, be it racial/ethnic, class, gender, sexuality, etc. We promote transformative justice.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies commit to social justice, equity, and inclusion. We recruit, hire, and retain diverse faculty, staff, and student staff. We advocate for equitable wages, family-friendly work schedules, and work/life balance. Self-care is a priority.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies commit to ensuring safer spaces by protecting the rights of all Black, Brown, and Indigenous students, staff, and faculty without regard to their sex, gender, gender identity and expressions, sexual orientation or preference, religion, ancestry, national origin, citizen status, age, ability, veteran status, and partnership status. We provide spaces and resources for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students, staff, and faculty to build community, for self-care, and to empower themselves. We commit to recruit more Black, Brown and Indigenous students to MSU Denver.

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** The Faculty and Staff of GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies supports designating our spaces (on campus and online) as “safer spaces.” The faculty and staff of GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies call for MSU Denver's administration to exercise their available power to implement this resolution in order to protect our Black, Brown, and Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and others on campus from state-sanctioned violence, including racial profiling and police brutality. To this end, we call for these actions on the part of MSU Denver:

- Academic Actions
  - Halt any divestment from and cutbacks to academic programming, activities, and resources for students of color at MSU Denver, especially given current austerity measures. This includes that departments such as GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies continue to operate in their respective areas, with continued and increased support from MSU Denver, to provide programming, activities, and resources for students of color.
  - Support departments, such as GITA, Africana Studies, and Chicana/o Studies, who intentionally recruit and hire faculty and staff with anti-oppression values and pedagogy.
  - Require all faculty and staff to receive annual, paid anti-oppression training from experts in the fields of anti-racism, power, privilege, oppression, and intersectional feminist studies, specifically focused around ending anti-Blackness and other forms of systemic oppression. Create a system for holding faculty accountable for upholding the values of these trainings in their classrooms.

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- Require Black History and courses on intersectionality as core general education for all majors, beyond the MC credit.
- Intentionality, Solidarity, and Impact Actions
  - Publicly affirm that Black lives matter; create a permanent and highly visible space (physical and virtual) where students, staff, and faculty can find resources for combating systemic racism, ending white supremacy, and abolishing all forms of oppression.
  - Set aside annual funds (outside of student fees) for Black Lives Matter initiatives, initiatives that focus on anti-Black racism, and supporting historically marginalized students and staff. This initiative shall be determined and lead by a majority of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.
  - Cut all ties with the Colorado Correctional Industries and divest from the Prison Industrial Complex, re-investing in local Black, Brown, and Indigenous-owned businesses. Acknowledge that the prison system is an extension of the slave system in the United States as Black, Brown, and Indigenous people continue to be disproportionately incarcerated at alarming rates.
  - Cut all ties with Wells Fargo given its history of predatory lending practices to marginalized, low-income, and BIPOC communities and its past involvement in funding private prisons and immigrant detention centers. Although Wells Fargo has stopped providing loans to these companies, we believe economic justice for Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities can be affirmed by reinvesting in smaller, local banks (e.g., Credit Unions).
  - Cut all ties with businesses and business partners, on and off campus, which do not stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and/or which disallow their employees from standing in solidarity with BLM initiatives.
- Student Care Actions
  - Allow students to protest on campus without fear of retribution, retaliation, or threat of bodily, mental, or spiritual harm. Designate Auraria campus a safer space for protesting students without police and/or military presence.
  - Declare offices and campus buildings an anti-police space, disallowing Auraria Campus Police Department (ACPD) entrance to MSU Denver facilities, spaces, and/or events, while also putting into place other mechanisms for community support (e.g., transformative and restorative justice services) when interpersonal harm occurs.
  - Work with CCD and CU Denver to end their contract with ACPD [For reference, the [University of Minnesota ended their contract with MPD for law enforcement at major events](#), [Clark University cut ties with Worcester Police Department](#), and [Denver Public School Board voted to end its relationship with DPD and remove school resources officers through the district](#)], allowing all students, especially students of color who experience increased police harassment and state violence, the space to learn, create community, and assemble on campus.
  - Redirect funding toward policing to hiring full-time Black, Brown, and Indigenous mental health practitioners and healers; students pay for counselors and should have support staff who look like them and understand their experiences. Additionally, support opportunities for studying Black, Brown, and Indigenous mental health workers through paid peer counseling opportunities in departments which offer any resources to students of color, and paid internships within MSU Denver's counseling center.
  - Provide comprehensive healthcare/insurance access to low-income students, with a wider range of medical interventions/supplies/equipment covered, at no additional cost to students.
  - End military recruitment on campus that preys on students of color.
- Institutional Equity Actions
  - Give seats at all levels of institutional governance and decision making to students of color. Such governance should be proportionate to the large population of BIPOC students on campus. These students shall have real voting power and will not be tokenized.

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- Increase the hiring of Black, Brown, and Indigenous tenure/tenure-track faculty and full-time, benefits eligible staff that proportionately reflects the percentage of students of color who are a part of the student body. In AY 2019-20, faculty of color constituted 21.5% of all full-time faculty and in AY 2018-19, 18.3% of affiliate faculty. The hiring process should be more equitable and not rely on precarious adjunct labor.
- Provide institutional resources and support for the retention and promotion of Black, Brown, and Indigenous tenure-track faculty. Since 2003, only half (50%) of all Black faculty, 33.1% of Indigenous faculty, and 71.4% of Latinx faculty achieved tenure and promotion to the associate level.
- Provide opportunities for Black, Brown, and Indigenous Cat II and affiliate faculty to move into tenure-track positions.
- Provide Black, Brown, and Indigenous staff professional development support and opportunities for advancement.
- Do not discriminate or inquire about a student's, staff's, or faculty member's past incarceration history for admission to, or employment at, any MSU Denver program.
- Programming Actions
  - Create more programming for Black, Brown, & Indigenous students, staff, & faculty (e.g., community resilience coaches, peer advocates/mentors who are trained in anti-racism and intersectionality, etc.).
  - Mandate a stronger connection between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Ensure that Student Affairs supports academic departments that are already and have been doing anti-oppression work, rather than building new programs that do not support this work.
  - Connect ODI and CMEI to engage more directly with students of color, particularly making a commitment to serving Black students.
  - Increase funding opportunities for student organizations, such as the Black Student Alliance and African Student Union, with the mission of educating and developing events/programming in anti-oppression. Provide peer mentorship for student org. officers, rooted in anti-racism and intersectionality, and to better assist students of color in leading successful student organizations.