

Dear President Capilouto, Provost Tracy, Senior Administration and Members of the Board of Trustees:

As University of Kentucky faculty, we write this letter in response to the decision to cover the mural in Memorial Hall. Although we do not have a uniform opinion on whether this is an appropriate decision, we are in agreement that covering up a decades old mural is not enough to improve problems of inclusion. We agree that the university could and should do more to improve the conditions on campus for all people of color.

First, we applaud the two dozen students with whom you met privately and their willingness to express their concerns and experiences at the University of Kentucky. It is not easy for young people to sit across from those in authority and speak truth to power. As faculty who work with students on a daily basis, we are well aware of the harassment, isolation, and marginalization that not only Black students, but also Latina/o, Asian and LGBTQ students feel on this campus. Further, Black faculty and staff, as well as other faculty and staff of color, are not immune to experiencing the hostility and systemic racism experienced by students. As undergraduate students are just one segment of the Black community on campus, the absence of Black faculty and staff in this very important conversation is demonstrative of the piece-meal approach that is often taken in matters of this kind.

Second, the closed-door nature of the discussions that have yielded the decision to cover the murals betrays the role of the university as a place for open dialogue and education. The opposing views held by the undersigned would have enriched the dialogue between the students and administration. It could have provided the university community with the space to learn about these murals, why some find them objectionable, and why some do not. Overall, a more open process would have been true to our mission. At day's end, the skill we uniquely possess and at which we excel is our ability to educate. We owe it to our students and to ourselves to model civil discourse on matters on which we disagree and agree.

Instead, we are left with a single gesture and lingering questions. Is this the most significant race-based issue at the University of Kentucky? Is the campus environment in which students view the mural that has led some to call for covering a piece of art also an issue? Is all the administration can provide to make our campus more inclusive is so many yards of fabric? Draping this mural is not a welcome mat. Black students, as well as faculty and staff, at the

University of Kentucky are surrounded by walls that are silent about their history at the University, in the Commonwealth and the world that we purport to open for all our students. Real change requires more.

We offer concrete steps the university can take if it is sincere in its stated goal of improving the experience of Black students, faculty and staff as well as other people of color at the University of Kentucky.

- The University should commission Black artists to create their own images of slavery and other aspects of African American and Black Kentucky History to counter the impact of the mural in Memorial Hall. We agree that what we put on our walls and the images we pass daily are important. The University is in the middle of a massive construction effort and will have many walls to cover. We should be attentive to those who are missing from the walls in the spaces and places we inhabit.
- The University can hire a cluster of scholars of Slavery and Emancipation to replace the one scholar in this area, Joanne Melish, who retired last year. The discussion of representations of slavery would be aided by making sure scholars with this expertise are present on campus.
- The University should expand current tools to track incidents of racial harassment against students and others in the University community. The University has begun a laudable effort to track campus safety through the C.A.T.S. program. The inclusion of additional questions about racial harassment would allow for an empirical view of student experiences and some guidance on how to develop programmatic and institutional responses.
- The University should provide financial support to expand the number of faculty of color at the University of Kentucky across all ranks and disciplines. This is consistent with the current Strategic Plan. However, we believe the current timeline set out in the strategic plan should be accelerated to 2018 rather than 2020
- The University should hire a dedicated person in the admissions office to increase the enrollment of students of color in undergraduate and graduate programs and the professional schools, particularly those who are Kentucky residents. We, too, believe in the Kentucky Promise and would like to see it extended to the Commonwealth's communities of color.

- The University needs to investigate expanding aid for students of color and increasing mentorship by adding substantive programs (e.g., the McNair Program which is a Federal TRIO program, and the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program) that have been successful in attracting and retaining students of color.
- The University of Kentucky, in conjunction with the University of Kentucky Counseling Center, should hire culturally competent mental health professionals, with training, experience, and expertise in working with racially and ethnically diverse populations, to develop, implement, and evaluate outreach programming, consultation, and crisis intervention services for UK faculty, staff, students to address personal, cultural, and collective trauma stemming from campus-based, local, and national incidents of racism, racial microaggressions, implicit bias, and/or racialized violence.
- The University should follow the lead of many other universities and require all students to take a course on race and ethnicity as part of the requirements for graduation.
- The University should expand financial support of the African American and Africana Studies Program, as well as other units that aid in the expansion of knowledge on subjects of race, culture and marginalization like Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, Asian Studies, Appalachian Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies.
- The University should conduct a national search to fill the Vice President of Institutional Diversity position left vacant by the retirement of J.J. Jackson.
- The University should embed inclusiveness in every aspect of campus life from those in leadership to students, faculty and staff that are recruited campus wide. The University can be more systematic in setting goals for departments and colleges in terms of recruiting and retaining diverse students, faculty and staff and creating space for members of underrepresented groups in meaningful places of leadership. A serious commitment to inclusiveness would consist of creating economic incentives for the executive team(s) of the University and each college on campus to meet specific goals.

Creating an environment of inclusion is the responsibility of every individual on campus, not just a select few. In order for meaningful and lasting change to occur at the University of Kentucky, we as a community must take proactive steps, expecting the very best of one another and working to the common goal of equal access in thought, word and deed for all stakeholders in and around the University.

Signed,

Submitted by the following core faculty of the African American and Africana Studies Program:

Melynda Price, *Law*

Nicole Jenkins, *Von Allmen School of Accountancy*

Lisa Cliggett, *Anthropology*

Reinette Jones, *UK Special Collections Research Center*

Anastasia Curwood, *History*

Nazera Wright, *English*

Jacqueline Couti, *Modern & Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures (MCLLC)*

Chamara Kwakye, *Gender & Women's Studies*

DaMaris Hill, *English*

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Wayne Lewis, *Educational Leadership Studies*

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University of Kentucky Faculty, Lecturers and Graduate Teaching Assistants:

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Juliana McDonald, *Anthropology*

Tad Mutersbaugh, *Geography*

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Jenna Goldsmith, *English*

Nicole Huberfeld, *Law*

Cortney Lollar, *Law*

Molly Blassing, *MCLLC*

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Mathew Willson, *Geography*
Leon Sachs, *MCLLC*
Mitchell Snider, *Geography*
Matthew Wells, *MCLLC*
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Herman Farrell, *Theatre and Dance*
Carrie Oser, *Sociology*
Edward Morris, *Sociology*
M. Cristina Alcalde, *Gender & Women's Studies*
Candice Crowell, *Educational, School and Counseling Psychology*
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William Stoops, *Behavioral Science*
Srimati Basu, *Gender & Women's Studies*
Hannah Knudsen, *Behavioral Science*
Anna Secor, *Geography*
Jeffory Clymer, *English*
Hang Nguyen, *History*
Danielle Stevens-Watkins, *EDP*
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Christina Studts, *Health Behavior*
Amy Murrell Taylor, *History*
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Allison Connelly, *Law*
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Yanira Paz, *Hispanic Studies*
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Lilian Milanes, *Anthropology*
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Christopher Pool, *Anthropology*
Sue Roberts, *Geography*
Erin Koch, *Anthropology and Health, Society & Populations*
Kristin Monroe, *Anthropology*
Robin Vanderpool, *Health Behavior*
Daniel Rowland, *History*
Janice Fernheimer, *Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies and Jewish Studies*
Kate Eddens, *Health Behavior*
Ana Liberato, *Sociology*

Akiko Takenaka, *History*
Denise Simpson, *Student Affairs*
Anita Fernander, *Behavior Science, College of Medicine*
Kate Black, *Archivist (Retired)*
Dwight Billings, *Sociology*
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