

Dear Dean Smith,

On May 31, 2020, the Black Law Students' Association and several affinity groups published a solidarity statement regarding George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and sadly, countless others. At the heart of the statement was a recognition of the Sturm College of Law's unique responsibility to act, educate, and support the movement.

Since then, BLSA has been working constructively to dialogue with the student body and professors, spread our message of hope, and express our frustrations through protesting. Indeed, protesting, because it feels as if no one hears us, sees us, or shares our pain and suffering. We have been working externships during the day, organizing over lunch, and taking classes well into the night. We wake up and fight the same fight over again, as hard as we can, and as fast as we can, because we know that we are fighting time and human nature. We are fighting a regression to the status quo, and a co-opting of the movement. We are fighting because we know long before we are law students, we are Black.

As student leaders, we made a promise to support each other on this long road of shared responsibility. We write this letter to reaffirm that promise to the Sturm College of Law: its alumni, faculty, students, and future. We are determined to follow through on our call to combat systemic racism aggressively and to support any and all avenues for change.

We write this letter to ask, can we call on you?

(I) We call on you to aggressively attract and retain Black law students because diversity and inclusiveness are not options nor aspirations but necessities in today's society.

(II) We call on you to aggressively collaborate and fundraise to establish four new scholarships that target aspiring Black lawyers as a symbol to the world that facilities are replaceable, but people are not.

(III) We call on you to aggressively recruit and hire Black men and Latinas to join the distinguished ranks of the college's full-time faculty because many of us simply cannot see ourselves.

(IV) Finally, we call on you to use your voice to call specifically on: Chancellor Jeremy Haefner; Provost Corinne Lengsfeld; Denver Mayor Michael Hancock; Denver District Attorney Beth McCann; Representatives KC Becker and Patrick Neville; Senators Leroy Garcia and Chris Holbert; Governor Polis; and the entire congressional delegation to demand justice.

We request a response to these issues by Monday, June 15, 2020, at 4 PM (MT).

I. We call on you, Dean Smith, to exercise leadership to ensure that every step of the Stur姆 College of Law's recruitment, admission, retention, and bar-passage process reflects the community it strives to become.

In today's legal world, diversity and inclusiveness are more than aspirations. They are necessities.

First, we want to recognize and thank the law school for its collective strides in the areas of diversity and inclusion. However, we must call on you, Dean Smith, and the community to do more. The law school has many metrics to be proud of: it places in the top-ten for its legal writing, clinics, and trial advocacy programs. However, we write this letter because before we are law students, we are Black. More than rankings, Black Lives Matter.

BLSA will never waver in its duty to the community, and its ethical obligation to increase the number of Black law students and attorneys in America. To date, BLSA has spent its time speaking to high school students at pipeline events, outreaching to our incoming law students across the country (including Minnesota and Virginia), and relentlessly engaging in the community to do our part. We are undeterred, but in many places along the way, our pipeline is leaking. We know the Black community is losing its best and its brightest, and we know that it is not always at the hands of the police.

We are not naïve. We understand the weight society places on certain numbers, statistics, school rankings, GPAs, LSAT scores...but we also know these metrics are limited in their capacity to develop a learning environment that reflects the community, let alone predict a well-rounded lawyer. We are not naïve. We also know that certain numbers, despite their probative value, are simply filed away. Only to underscore what we hope is a continuous dialogue do we wish to emphasize that in 2018-2019 our collective system and its efforts resulted in two Juris Doctorate degrees to Black students - in a class of approximately two-hundred and fifty. This result is a far cry from

our shared vision that begs the question: How did we get to two? And what more can we do to support Black law students?

We call on you to engage in a dialogue with BLSA and its allies to improve the process. We want to be part of the answer. We want to ensure that the law school's investments are indeed providing a healthy return, and yielding the best learning environment for the twenty-first-century lawyer. As we triage issues and prioritize approaches, we stand unified in stating that our most immediate need is a permanent staff position to support the students of color that the Sturm College of Law loses each year to systemic attrition. We also have structural suggestions that involve:

- (1) the recruitment of Black law students, right here in Denver;
- (2) reinforcing and increasing the programming for the Race, Place, and Law collective, and Associate Dean of Institutional Diversity and Inclusiveness; and
- (3) revisiting the effectiveness, comparative burden, and demographics of the bar passage program.

We request a response on these issues by Monday, June 15, 2020, at 4 PM (MT).

II. We call on you Dean Smith to aggressively collaborate to fundraise for the establishment of four new scholarships that target aspiring Black lawyers as a symbol to the world that facilities are replaceable, but people are not.

The University of Denver, Sturm College of Law, Frank H. Ricketson Jr. Law Building is our home. We say this fully cognizant of the macro- and micro-aggression that have transpired in its halls and classrooms. The law building is a \$65 million, LEED-certified-gold work of art. But it too is a complex, indescribable symbol. For several months it has shown us what happens when its doors are locked; the learning continues, the community continues.

For generations, financial constraints have plagued the attraction and retention of Black law students, professionals, and educators – a reality so ironic, given the wealth of the legal profession, that it must be viciously challenged. Unchecked, this inequitable reality portends a tale and a temptation, a regression toward the status quo. We know our enemy because we have been fighting this fight long before we were born. As we see the issue of systemic racism come off the back burner, we are hopeful. We would be remiss if we did not commend the school, the Stur姆 family, the Yegge trust, and the countless other named benefactors for their financial support, but we must beg the community to do more.

The law building stands as a symbol of what is possible through vigorous collaboration. We call on you to aggressively partner with the 17,000-member alumni network, the local Sam Cary bar network, the Center for Legal Inclusiveness, and the greater Denver legal community to raise new money to establish four new scholarships for Black law students.

Our vision is clear: a scholarship in memory of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the Countless Others. Our message is simple: people are irreplaceable. We knew that the media would sensationalize our anger, and blind people to our story and hopes, which is why we call on you, Dean Smith, and the network that helped raise the law building, to send a symbolic message of hope that will long outlast the news cycle.

We request a response on these issues by Monday, June 15, 2020, at 4 PM (MT).

III. We call on you, Dean Smith, to exercise your leadership to ensure that the Stur姆 College of Law's hiring practices and its full-time faculty reflect the community it strives to become.

Growing up as a Black man in America has a unique set of challenges, and doing so in the field of law is rare. Others can certainly relate and empathize, but few have "lived it." We are protesting simply because we cannot see ourselves.

We are aware of the nature and complexities of our ask. We, more than most, understand the importance of hiring the right people for the right jobs. However, we cannot remain content with the status quo. The full-time faculty serve in critical decision-making roles beyond mere instruction. They are vital to admissions, developing a holistic curriculum, and are integral to improving the hiring process. We call on you to engage in a dialogue with BLSA and its allies to improve the recruitment, hiring, and retention process within the next academic year. Until the time comes where the full-time faculty resembles the community - specifically in regards to Black men and Latinas - we call on you to commit to bridging the gap(s) with visiting faculty. We also call on the school to increase its support of pipeline programs such as the Emerging Legal Scholars Initiative, the Langston Writing Workshop, etc.

We request a response on these issues by Monday, June 15, 2020, at 4 PM (MT).

IV. We call on you, Dean Smith, to commit, to stand with us, and to use your voice to publicly deliver this call for justice specifically to: Chancellor Jeremy Haefner; Provost Corinne Lengsfeld; Denver Mayor Michael Hancock; Denver District Attorney Beth McCann; Representatives KC Becker and Patrick Neville; Senators Leroy Garcia and Chris Holbert; and Governor Polis.

We understand that there are several topics beyond your immediate purview. As members of the legal community, we must not underestimate the value of our time, our skills, and our voice in the call for change.

Our fellow undergraduate students recently asked that the University contribute to specific organizations. In spirit and support, we ask that the law school share its legal resources, as well as its success stories, such as the Robert B. Yegge Memorial Scholarships, to help improve the number of scholarship opportunities available to diverse students on campus.

We also call on Dean Bruce Smith, Chancellor Jeremy Haefner, and Provost Corinne Lengsfeld to share and amplify this message with Denver Mayor Michael Hancock and Denver District Attorney Beth McCann by **Friday, June 19, 2020, at 4 PM (MT)**.

The novel coronavirus showed us how our City lost perspective on public safety, policing, and detention. Between March 1 and April 15, 2020, the average daily inmates at the detention center and county jail fell by 41% (from 1,806 to 1,057). A novel virus should not be a prerequisite for a City to demonstrate compassion toward its elderly, pregnant, impoverished, afflicted, and at-risk citizens. Collectively, the University of Denver student body has been fighting to raise funds and identify legal resources to fight its real enemy. We implore our City to stop fighting its people every inch of the way. The District Attorney has the power to pursue charges or to dismiss a case altogether. Currently, our community feels as if no one hears them, sees them, or

understands their pain, suffering, and humiliation. Effectively, we are fueling a machine that perpetuates systemic racism. We beg the City to drop all non-violent charges and to refund bail funds to the extent practicable (waiving statutory and administrative fees) or transfer the funds to more beneficial purposes. We boldly beg the City to re-focus its perspective and join us in combatting systemic racism.

Finally, we call on Dean Bruce Smith, Chancellor Jeremy Haefner, Provost Corinne Lengsfeld, Mayor Michael Hancock, and District Attorney Beth McCann to share this message with Representatives KC Becker and Patrick Neville; Senators Leroy Garcia and Chris Holbert; Governor Polis; and the entire congressional delegation. We call on these elected officials to hear us, see us, and help us follow through on our calls to combat systemic racism aggressively. BLSA and its allies stand willing, ready, and able to assist.

WE DEMAND A REPLY TO THESE ISSUES, WE DEMAND JUSTICE, AND WE DEMAND CHANGE.

In solidarity,

Black Law Student Association
Asian Pacific American Law Student Association
Latinx Law Student Association
DU OUTLaws
Jewish Law Students Association
Student Bar Association