

USF Faculty Senate Resolution on Racial Justice

Whereas, American history, culture, institutions and practices are deeply and widely permeated with anti-blackness and systemic racism¹; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism have been brought into sharp relief by the recent upsurge in attention to police brutality directed against Black Americans, crystalized in the Black Lives Matters protests and related anti-racism civil demonstrations throughout the United States; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest in the disparity with which the current Covid-19 pandemic strikes communities of color in contrast to white Americans; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest in the higher rates of arrest, detainment, and conviction, as well as higher sentences for comparable crimes, for Black and non-white Americans than for white Americans; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest in the massive wealth gap between white Americans and Black Americans and other Americans of color; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest by the severe underrepresentation of Black Americans and Americans of color on the Boards of Directors of large corporations and and in the administration of higher education; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest by the substantial underrepresentation of Black Americans and Americans of color at almost all levels of state and federal government; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest in the inadequacy of the education about the history and current operations of Anti-Blackness, systemic racism, and white-supremacy generally provided to students in the American educational system; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are manifest in the inadequacy of the societal attention and resources devoted to the development of strategies -- political, social, educational, economic, psychological, and other -- for undermining the current operations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism and for eliminating their iniquitous and devastating effects; and

Whereas, the foregoing is only a partial enumeration of the myriad manifestations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism inflicting American society that disproportionately plague the lives

¹ For the purposes of this document, "racism" should be understood to refer broadly to discrimination of any kind against persons on the basis of their race, color, ethnicity, or national origin.

of Black Americans and Americans of color, such as higher eviction rates, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, and persistent, wide achievement gaps at every level of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education between white students and students of color; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are overwhelmingly a matter of active patterns of life that structure and animate individuals, communities, and legal, social, and political institutions that are visible mainly through their effects, which, because their causes are hidden, are too easily taken for brute facts, rather than for the harmful and unjust enduring and intergenerational consequences of anti-Black and systemically racist social practices; and

Whereas, the covert and implicit character of the operations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism make exposing, diagnosing, tracing, and otherwise illuminating these operations essential to their full recognition; and

Whereas, because the anti-Blackness and systemic racism manifest in these ways are so at odds with our express ideals as a nation, and because facing them, let alone addressing them, is so challenging, they are especially likely to be ignored, underplayed, or covered over in our official self-understanding; and

Whereas, anti-Blackness and systemic racism are as basic to our national history and present experience as are the ideals of democracy, due process, individual liberty, equality of basic opportunity, and the rule of law, familiarity with which is universally acknowledged as fundamental to a civic education; and

Whereas, it is long past due that the historical role, current instantiations, fundamental injustice, and devastating effects of systemic anti-Blackness and racism in American culture be publicly and forthrightly acknowledged as the societal ill and shame they are; and

Whereas, education and research, the core and defining activities of the University of South Florida, are tools of the first importance in the eradication of anti-Blackness and systemic racism:

Therefore, be it resolved,

That the Faculty of the University of South Florida recognizes anti-Blackness and systemic racism as primary ills of American society, fully on par with the ills of poverty, disease, and ignorance; and

That is the stance of its Faculty that the University of South Florida should take a leadership role in recognizing anti-Blackness and systemic racism as primary ills of American society by expressly committing, as a core component of its Mission and as a basic element of its strategic plan, to taking affirmative steps to remedy the ills of anti-Blackness and systemic racism; and

That it is the stance of the Faculty of the University of South Florida that no student should be able to earn an undergraduate degree from the University of South Florida without having had a sound, basic education concerning the historical and current manifestations and operations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism in American culture; and

That it is the stance of its Faculty that, in addition to redoubling its efforts at attracting and retaining talented diverse students and faculty, the University of South Florida should devote focused attention and substantial resources to promoting and supporting research aimed at exposing, diagnosing, tracing, and otherwise bringing to light the operations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism, both in their historical and current forms, and from a variety of disciplinary approaches; and

That it is the stance of the Faculty of the University of South Florida that there should be continual and ongoing rich and comprehensive education for administrators, faculty and staff on issues of systemic racism; and

That it is the stance of its Faculty that the University of South Florida should devote focused attention and substantial resources to research devoted to the development of strategies -- political, social, educational, economic, psychological, and other -- for undermining the current operations of anti-Blackness and systemic racism and for reversing their iniquitous and devastating effects on individuals and communities.

Introduced: September 23, 2020

Passed: October 28, 2020