



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
STUDENT GOVERNMENT
Office of the President

To: The Honorable Student Body of the University of South Florida Tampa Campus
From: Spencer McCloskey, Tampa Governor; Zach Blair-Andrews, Tampa Lt. Governor
Subject: Black Lives Matter
Date: June 5th, 2020

Last Monday was a day that should forever be remembered for it marks the date of the brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This was an egregious act that has called out the flaws ingrained in the law enforcement system while emphasizing the necessity for change. White Americans have sat idle while Black Americans have fought for basic rights, such as the right to breathe. As a University, a Student Government (SG), and frankly as humans, our commitment to the Black community must be strengthened and solidified.

Let us make it very clear that the notion of racism and discrimination did not end with the Civil War or the Civil Rights Movement. As leaders and as Americans we must acknowledge the deeply rooted seeds of racism ingrained in our history and unfortunately ingrained in our culture. It is in our University's history to be trailblazers who refuse to stand idly by. Let us remember that in 1961, 59 years ago, Ernest Boger was the first Black student at the University of South Florida, designating the institution as the first desegregated predominantly white institution in the state. Let us never forget that during his time as a student, Ernest Boger was subjected to an attack of discrimination and hate in a Tampa Restaurant because of the color of his skin. This may seem like a lifetime ago, but this is still the story of too many Black people. Together we have the power to change the narrative - a future where Black Lives Matter.

On November 19, 1961, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to the city of Tampa and spoke about the issues of racism, civil rights, and school desegregation. In 1982, USF commemorated that visit with the creation of the MLK Plaza in the center of the campus. As a university, if we are unwilling to live up to the ideals that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for, how can we take pride in the MLK plaza? The MLK plaza is supposed to be a symbol of our University, as it embodies the importance of speaking truth to power. Since the plaza sits at the heart of our campus, Dr. King's values should be demonstrated in the principles and actions of this university. His words should not be weaponized against the very community that he gave his life for. We must not tell Black people how to feel, how to protest, or how to mourn.

As a white man, it is important to acknowledge my privilege while also calling upon students who look like me to do the same. We must recognize the advantages that we have and use it for advocacy of

marginalized groups in our society - silence is compliance. Students that look like me, this is to you: listen, learn, and educate yourself on the history that has contributed to this issue. We in leadership will be doing the same as we believe this is important in order to help end the ignorance and hate. White supremacy is an ideology that is not accepted and will not be tolerated.

We are proud of the vast number of USF students that are so passionately making their voices heard online, in the city, and in the news. We are also concerned by comments received from students about the services on campus that have fallen short. We see the feedback you have given us, and we ask that you give us more. Do not stop making your voices heard, keep the pressure on the right people to do what is just. This is the pressure that our country needs in order to create change. Lt. Governor Blair-Andrews and I have reached out to the Tampa Police Departments to facilitate conversation and hold these organizations accountable to ensure that Black lives truly matter. Our university promotes diversity and inclusivity and must therefore continuously act on and implement those ideals. Our action plan at SG includes:

- Open meetings with state representatives so that those who write our laws can hear student ideas and input
- A continued commitment to learning through workshops facilitated by Black students, faculty, and staff that will be implemented as mandatory training in SG
- The hiring of our Assistant Director of Diversity and Wellness within the Tampa Executive Branch
- An increase in transparency by hosting monthly town halls where students will be welcomed to voice all their concerns which will be communicated to administration.
- Organize a Student Government Diversity and Inclusion Council

I, Governor Spencer McCloskey, and Lt. Governor Zach Blair-Andrews call Mayor Jane Castor and Chief Brian Dugan to cease the unnecessary use of force by the Tampa Police Department. We are aware that our students have been on the front lines exercising their freedom of speech by protesting a system that has denied and deprived our Black students and the Black community of their basic human rights. Police abuse against the Black community is a never-ending cycle that repeats itself far too often. As leaders in times like this, it is very uncivil and disheartening to see the Mayor and Police Chief condone the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and pepper spray on peaceful protestors especially when you both have the duty to protect and serve your constituents. We demand better and we demand that this response to protestors is no longer condoned. It is time to be leaders and it is time to do what is right especially in a world of wrongs. May I remind you that you hold an elected position.

We as the Student Government at the University of South Florida will fight for Black lives even beyond our term. We will never stop saying their names: Eric Garner, Ezell Ford, Michelle Cusseaux, Tanisha Anderson, Tamir Rice, Natasha McKenna, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, Bettie Jones, Philando Castile,

Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Eric Reason, Dominique Clayton, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade and many more. They were mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters and their names should never be forgotten.

DocuSigned by:
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Spencer McCloskey
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