



Dear fellow Physics Graduate Students and our physics community,

In observance of today's #Strike4BlackLives from [ParticlesForJustice.org](https://particlesforjustice.org), the Physics Graduate Student Council (PGSC) vocalizes our support of the Movement for Black Lives. We are committing to taking concrete steps to make PGSC, our department, and the broader field of physics actively anti-racist.

The recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and too many others have reminded our nation of its systemic racism. It's devastating that it took so many lives for this movement to become nationally recognized. We acknowledge the need for the very important work of national organizations like Black Lives Matter and Colors For Change and local organizations like Freedom, Inc. and Urban Triage. We also recognize that the PGSC can play a role in effecting necessary change for the future.

Systemic racism is a problem in the state of Wisconsin; [Wisconsin is ranked 50th in the nation for racial integration](#). In 2015, [Tony Robinson](#), an unarmed Black teen, was murdered by police right here in Madison. In 2018, Black people constituted 7% of the population of Madison but were [43% of the arrests](#). Even on our campus, [40% of use-of-force incidents](#) from the UW Police are directed towards Black people. These issues are **local**, they are **immediate**, and it is **our responsibility** to speak out against these injustices and the inequalities in our community. We echo our Department Chair's request for flexibility in work schedules in order to allow members of our community to participate in any way that they feel called to do.

We recognize that our community is not exempt from the systems of oppression which are the root cause of so many tragic deaths. And while not as life-threatening as the issue of police brutality, the issue of anti-Blackness in academia is also a product of this same systemic racism. Within the field of physics, [3% of bachelor's degrees are awarded to Black students and 2% of PhDs are awarded to Black physicists](#). **Our physics department currently has zero Black PhD students and zero Black faculty**. Even if it requires substantial changes in the PhD program and re-evaluation of current policies, we, as a field and as a department, must do better.

We recognize that this email is coming far too late. In addition to encouraging students to get involved with the Movement for Black Lives, **we PGSC Officers are also committing to:**

- completing a [free, online anti-racism training](#), and we encourage other students to complete it as well,
- working alongside the department to continue pursuing the [APS Bridges Program](#) which is "an effort to increase the number of physics PhDs awarded to underrepresented minority students, defined by the project as African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans",
- creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for students and eliminating barriers that disproportionately impact minorities to ensure successful completion of the PhD program for Black students,
- leveraging our roles on the [Physics Department committees](#) for Climate & Diversity, Graduate Program, Recruitment, and Colloquium to advocate for department-wide changes, and
- continuously re-evaluating the climate of our department for underrepresented minorities through town halls and our [anonymous comment box](#).

We cherish the education and opportunities available as members of the department, but we believe now is the time each of us to take part in serious self-reflection as individuals within our largely privileged academic community.

In solidarity,

Your 2020-2021 PGSC Officers

Kayla Leonard, Abby Bishop, Cameron Kuchta, Sarah McCarthy, Brent Mode,  
Susmita Mondal, Robert Morgan, Trevor Oxholm, Abigail Shearrow, Leslie Taylor