

Subject: Call To Action

Importance: High

Good afternoon all,

Oregon has a long history of anti-Black racism. From the Black exclusion laws to redlining [1] while White settlers were given Native American land[2] even in the case where Black people were present before and during the Lewis and Clarke expedition[3]. These practices carry on to this day, and OHSU is no exception. **Black people represent 6% of Portland Oregon population[4] but only 3% at OHSU[5], with a minority of leadership positions** (e.g. 36 out of 6,820 faculty). This has been a trend over 10 years[6].

Long before the killing of George Floyd in 2020 that sparked national protests, the Black Employee Resource Group (BERG) have highlighted racial injustice, and presented possible solutions to the OHSU leadership to no avail.

BERG and OHSU leadership have met countless times where BERG has clearly laid out its concerns and proposals to push OHSU's journey to become an anti-racist institution. It was disappointing but not surprising to see that BERG was never consulted on the prioritization or renegotiation of these proposals even though the BERG was stated as a partner on OHSU newsletters. OHSU leadership appears to have settled on initiatives that are minimalistic in nature. These initiatives lack the substantial impact required to truly get OHSU on the Anti-racism journey. In some cases these initiatives are contrary to BERG's proposals.

It is offensive to BERG that OHSU not only neglected the advice and proposals of BERG's leadership, but decided to collect, prioritize and publish feedback and input from OHSU members as a whole which is overwhelmingly white. This in itself is racism because Black employees only constitute 3% of the OHSU population, and this survey clearly does not represent the voice of Black employees. Once again white individuals are deciding what they feel should be suitable courses of action for black employees when OHSU has been repeatedly advised by Black leaders. As much as other input is welcomed as a potential viable solution, BERG's proposals should be prioritized above other proposals. Black people are the ones inflicted with the negative impact of racism on a daily basis, and their ideas and suggestions should supersede all other change initiatives that OHSU plans to embark on.

In a recent BERG meeting, Black employees at OHSU expressed concern that they didn't matter to leadership. We expressed that the recent LYNCHINGS have deep and profound effects on us and lamented OHSU's lack of serious acknowledgement and commitment to do anything meaningful to combat their own gross racist behavior. A very small number of managers have expressed empathy and are offering days off for their employees, while the overall theme at OHSU is to continue working under excruciating conditions. The apathy as a whole from OHSU leadership is apparent. The newsletters are generic and non-committal to real change, and only serve to pacify grieving individuals who contribute to this university. The BERG members in large part do not trust HR, and has no reason to. This was a hot topic in our last meeting. Multiple examples were given where RACIST behavior was reported to HR only for HR to gaslight and send employees back to their respective departments with no resolution.

OHSU has dealt with 4 noose incidents and not one substantial action item has taken place. That realization paints OHSU as an enabler of racism despite what the leaders say. To make matters worse OHSU never prosecuted or terminated the employment of these perpetrators. Where other organizations pressed hate crime charges against individuals that did this, OHSU did nothing of note. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/09/04/noose-was-found-hanging-university-illinois-elevator-student-has-been-arrested/> The article also states that another employee was terminated for flinging a noose in the direction of Black employees. **If this is what anti-racism looks like, then one must deduce that OHSU is racist for their lack of tangible action.**

For OHSU to say that there are no plans to create specific new positions for Black employees to lead anti-racism work[7], but expects BERG to exhaust its time and energy volunteering in this work, is RACISM. It is the utmost disrespect to drain us of our precious time, energy, and emotions only to do NOTHING we nor antiracist specialist such as Dr. Camara Jones whom OHSU invited to speak about being an antiracist organization recommend. OHSU consistently ask its Black employees who are traumatized to re-traumatize themselves in numerous meetings without offering opportunity to heal. This is evident by the lack of interest in creating real change or offering reparations.

We've highlighted the gaps, asked questions about changes, participated in discussions and despite the Black Lives Matter national protests that emphasized our previous points, the BERGs name was used as the Black face of OHSU while the institution did nothing. All of BERG is of one mind when we say we are tired of being disrespected, and being used to push a false narrative of change in order to maintain white supremacy which has permeated within OHSU for decades

While other similar institutions are making significant changes in the way they operate, OHSU despite having FOUR noose incidents at its institution, is dragging its feet and ignoring its most knowledgeable asset as it relates to anti-racism: BERG.

Below are a list of requests BERG has put forth that have been wholly ignored or denied.

We demand a response to this letter explaining plans and timelines to move these proposals into ACTION.