



**Graduate Public Affairs Council Statement on Racial Injustice
& Our Commitment to Advocate for Change**

Today we grieve for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Mike Ramos, and all other Black Americans murdered by police in a long, unbroken history of injustice. They are held in our memory only by the power of grieving families who speak out and the labor of Black activists across the country. These voices call out a desperate warning: to be silent is to be complicit in their deaths. Mike Ramos was murdered right here in Austin, Texas, by officers of our own Austin Police Department. We cannot accept that any of our Black colleagues could be next. We will not be silent. Black lives matter.

The LBJ School's Graduate Public Affairs Council stands opposed to racist policing, opposed to brutality and violence against Black Americans, and opposed to the local, state, and national institutions that allow for the violence to continue without justice. We stand in support and solidarity with our Black students, faculty, staff, neighbors, friends, and families. We stand prepared to do what we can to defend those who must speak out, not in civic duty, but in defense of their very lives.

The LBJ School and the University of Texas at Austin are held in high regard around the world, but we have a long way to go before we can call our institution a stronghold of anti-racist leadership. Nevertheless, justice demands that we become anti-racist. We must amplify Black voices, listen to our Black peers, and learn from Black history. We must address our own racist policies and complicit behavior, making the critical leap from students to teachers and practitioners of anti-racism. By honestly judging our shortcomings and educating ourselves, we can renew hope in President Lyndon B. Johnson's greatest charge: "to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man."

The Graduate Public Affairs Council (GPAC) is not making this statement alone. We join the voices of [UT Austin's Interim President Jay Hartzell](#) and [Vice President Dr. Leonard Moore](#). We follow the leadership of [UT Austin Student Government and the Black Student Alliance](#). As called for by [Dean Angela Evans](#) of the LBJ School: "We have to reject the presence of violence. We have to reject the systemic inequality that plagues our society and that prevents us from becoming what we are capable of being. Instead, we have to open our eyes and hearts to stand together." Many students and faculty are doing this work right now, and we fully support their efforts online, in the streets, and in the halls of government.

In partnership with the LBJ Policy Alliance for Communities of Color (PACC), GPAC has specific goals and actions we want to share with our community, taking what we are learning and putting anti-racism into practice. We are committed to amplifying Black voices in our events, classrooms, and all spaces LBJ students occupy. We call for diverse leadership in our student body, our faculty, and the administration. We will work to use GPAC's resources to protect students who speak out against racial injustice and police brutality, support students targeted by racist policy, promote an anti-racist culture, and promote anti-racist education at the LBJ School.

We must take concrete actions towards these goals. GPAC commits to:

1. Pledge to match the \$350 donations made to the George Floyd Memorial Fund by both the UT Senate of College Councils and the UT Black Student Alliance.
2. Hold an online student assembly the evening of June 9th (details sent separately), and continue to hold assemblies that give students an internal platform to strategize;
3. Engage with the Senate of College Councils, Graduate Student Assembly, and main campus student leadership organizations to support UT-wide anti-racist policy and initiatives, which includes ending all contracts between UT Austin and the Austin Police Department;
4. Commit GPAC funds to promote student-led events in the 2020-2021 academic year that center Black voices and organizations in our education in racial injustice;
5. Support and accelerate the development of a civil rights and liberties Professional Development core course for the 2021-2022 academic year; and
6. Utilize our newly-created GPAC Diversity & Inclusion Officer and Committee to coordinate and lead additional anti-racist action at the LBJ School.

Our student organization is fundamentally implicated in the safety and equity of our Black peers. Our resources are limited, but we are in the good company of anti-racist leaders within the LBJ School's student body, its faculty, and its administration. We urge every member of the LBJ School family to use their voice now and stand up for those who are in the line of these injustices. Together we will reject silence, turn words into actions, and become the school we are called to be.

In Solidarity,

Graduate Public Affairs Council (GPAC) Executive Committee
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

Policy Alliance for Communities of Color (PACC) Executive Committee
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

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Resources:

UT Campus:

- Call for Action from [UT Graduate Student Assembly](#)
- Call for Action from [UT Black Student Alliance](#)
- [Counseling and Mental Health Center](#)

Greater Austin Community:

- [Austin Monthly List of Austin Organizations Promoting Racial Equality](#)
- [Austin Monthly List of Black-Owned Business to Support](#)
- [Black Pearl Books \(Black-owned Local Bookstore\)](#)

Education and Awareness for Allies:

- [Combating Racism Resource Guide](#) from the UT Black Student Alliance and UTSG
- [Anti-Racism Resources](#)
- [Anti-Racism for Beginners](#)
- [A Guide to Allyship](#)