

31 May 2020

Dear Chancellor DiStefano; President Kennedy; Chair Gallegos; Vice Chair Griego; Student Body Presidents Chavous, Frommelt, and Conway:

“[On Tuesday Morning] we woke up to a graphic video that depicted the violent murder of an unarmed, restrained Black man named George Floyd by Minneapolis police Officers Derek Chauvin and Tou Thao. Chauvin knelt on the neck of Floyd and pressed him into the hot asphalt, forcing Floyd to inhale the fumes from an SUV owned by the Minneapolis Police Department while Thao stood guard and watched. Chauvin continued to apply pressure even as George lay motionless and pleaded in pain saying “Please, please I can’t breathe.” George Floyd was murdered by the Minneapolis Police Department. Full stop. Regardless of the reason for his arrest, his death cannot be justified, and those who attempt to do so are part of the problem. Following his arrest, the Minneapolis Police Department released a false statement, claiming that he died due to ‘medical incident.’ George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, was murdered and he did not deserve to die.”

On Friday May 29th, 2020, we announced our solidarity with the University of Minnesota Student Alliance and the University’s decision to cease all contractual partnerships with the Minnesota Police Department (MPD)¹. Their Student Body President, Jael Kerandi, wrote, “We have lost interest in discussion, community conversations, and ‘donut hours’. We no longer wish to have a meeting or come to an agreement, there is no middle ground. The police are murdering Black men with no meaningful repercussions” (26 May 2020)².

We share the same sentiments. We are tired. We have met a profound level of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion from the burdens of a system that has failed our community. We are tired of grieving lives that were meant to be lived across the nation. We are tired of the aimless administrative meetings. We are tired of the silence on all individual and institutional levels of the University of Colorado- Boulder. We should not have to wait for a Black or Brown member of our own Boulder community to fall in order to act. We are tired.

Black and Brown communities are dying disproportionately from COVID-19. Black cisgender women. Black cisgender men. Black children. Black trans women. Black trans men. Black undocumented people. Black is criminalized. Black people are being murdered and Black people are being imprisoned. The University of Colorado - Boulder is not immune to anti-black racism. We were a part of the organizing and demands that took place in Fall-Spring 19-20 regarding discrimination and harassment policies and anti-black racism on campus³. A University that prides itself on values of diversity, inclusion, and excellence must act upon those values. We do not have time for further discussion. We do not have time for continued meetings.

Over the past week, across the country, as folks assemble peacefully with their hands up, chanting, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot,” protestors have been met with the advancement of SWAT and police firing rubber bullets and tear gas. The actions of law enforcement all over the nation mirror the relationship between police and Black and Brown communities- a relationship that has resulted in deep physical and psychological trauma. The University of Colorado - Boulder (UC-B) remained remarkably silent until Friday evening.

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<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/student-body-president-demands-university-of-minnesota-minneapolis-police-department/amp>

² [UMN Student Body President on Twitter: "There is no more discussion to be had, only action. There is no justification for the murder of George Floyd. Therefore we, without hesitation DEMAND that the UMPD ceases any partnerships with the MPD immediately. If you would like to sign on go to https://t.co/EcLWfVq6ps -J... https://t.co/1dN10sYmXg"](https://t.co/EcLWfVq6ps)

³ [BSA Demands](#)

Chancellor DiStefano stated “we stand in solidarity with all our members of our campus community, including our police department, and the City of Boulder”. Enough is enough. UC-B has contractual relationships with the Boulder Police Department, the Colorado Department of Corrections and the Colorado Correctional Industries - the latter of which the contract ends in a month on June 30th, 2020 of this fiscal year⁴. The furniture at UC-B is from prison labor unless waived as incarcerated individuals only receive the footnote of \$0.84 to \$2.25⁵, while that furniture is marked far higher. These agreements, these profit-driven agreements are in direct conflict with the stated values of diversity, inclusion, and excellence. Value is a verb, not a noun. This is the continuation of prison slavery and the criminalization of Black and Brown communities. This involvement directly relates to the divestment and relationship of Black and Brown people in the community and at the University. This is your call to action:

We DEMAND that the University of Colorado Police Department ceases any partnerships with the Boulder Police Department immediately.

We DEMAND that the University of Colorado cease the partnership with the Colorado Department of Corrections and divest holding from any private prison companies.

We DEMAND that the University of Colorado reinvest 1% of the endowment in supporting businesses and initiatives run by formerly incarcerated people. These demands include any previous contracts, investments, and additional relations relating to the Police Department and Department of Corrections.

We DEMAND that the University of Colorado- Boulder continue to develop anti-racism and de-escalation training practices for community staff, faculty, and campus police, per the Black Student Alliance’s demands in October 2019.

We DEMAND a reply to this concern within 24 hours of receipt.

In grief, love, and exhaustion,

Ruth Woldemichael

Black Woman. Interim Vice President, Black Student Alliance. Third-Year Undergraduate, University of Colorado-Boulder.

Olivia Gardner

Black Woman. University of Colorado Alumni Class of 2020. Co-Founder of Transformative Teach. Equity & Excellence Student Award 2020.

Signatories:

[Public Petition: A Response on the Murder of George Floyd Signatories \(Responses\)](#)

⁴ [How to Buy Furniture](#)

⁵ [Prison Wages: Appendix](#)