

June 10, 2020

President Bidy Martin
Dean of Faculty Catherine Epstein
Amherst College
P.O. Box 5000
Amherst, MA 01002-5000

Dear President Martin and Dean Epstein:

We write as concerned alumni of Amherst College in response to not only the tragic killings of Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and the egregiously long list of Black trans, queer, and disabled people, women, and men who have been killed by police officers in this country and the nation's persistently inadequate legal and sociopolitical response, but also to the College's response to these and other racial injustices.

While we appreciate President Martin's electronic letter titled "Racism, Truth, and Responsibility," circulated to students, faculty, staff, and alumni on May 31, 2020, it would be remiss if we did not inquire further into, scrutinize in fact, the meanings and requirements of those three words vis-à-vis Amherst College to ensure that they are more than just concepts but produce meaningful principles and actions. In *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), James Baldwin wrote poignantly: "I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually." We similarly care about Amherst, a place which for some of us gave us the opportunity to be the first people in our families to graduate from college; allowed some of us to momentarily escape the poverty, violence, and despair of our communities; gave some of us the chance to dream, for more than we had previously imagined possible; allowed many of us to be a part of a community of peers who have become lifelong friends; exposed many of us to a bounty of intellectual worlds that challenged and enriched our minds so that we could go out into the world and better it; and, gave many of us a great sense of hope, excitement, and pride the moment we set foot on that campus. And, this is why we, alumni, continue to invest ourselves in our College, to ensure that that sense of hope, excitement, and pride never dissipates for future students.

We thus consider it not only our right but our moral duty to ensure that Amherst lives up to its promise of safety and freedom from anti-black racism, a sense of belonging, and equal ownership for Black students, and its goal of both being and cultivating difference-making leaders.

Racism

Over the past several decades, our understanding of racism as a concept has usefully advanced from the most commonly understood individual or overt forms of racism to revealing the pernicious mechanisms of institutional and structural racism to deciphering the contours of unconscious or implicit bias and microaggressions. Yet, very little has abated the degree of racial hatred, violence, and injustice that Black people have experienced in this country. In fact, as your letter rightly notes, over the past few years, overt racism and white supremacy have intensified. We appreciate the College's acknowledgement of racism in its "broadest and most local, interpersonal forms" and that anti-black racism has a long history and material realities given the extent to which "it is embedded in our institutional structures, social systems, and cultural norms." That notwithstanding, we would like to underscore how critical it is for the College in all of its anti-racism efforts (statements and initiatives) to explicitly define and name what anti-black racism is in order to truly address anti-black racism and be a better ally and protector, in fact, of Black students.

It is important *that* we define things, and *how* we define them, and that we *name* them. It is not enough to say *where* racism is—in the institutional structures, social systems, and cultural norms—but *what* racism is. It is not meaningful to refer to racism in *general* (broad, imprecise, and vague) terms, but in *specific* (precise and substantive) terms. And, we should use every single opportunity to persistently name it until that definitional understanding is embedded in the human and social psychology of America. Speaking

about racism solely in any other manner—that is, centering where it exists or embeds itself, or using terms that we have come so used to habitually using, buzzwords such as “racial hatred,” “racist bigotry,” and the like—brings racism to a level of abstraction that has made this the easier way to talk about racism and more difficult to come up with concrete, effective solutions. We risk psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually disassociating ourselves from its true meaning, functioning, and consequences. This does not only present moral-ethical and practical problems for us in terms of tackling anti-black racism, but we run the risk of committing another injustice against the very people we are fighting for and trying to protect: an epistemic one.

Epistemic injustice occurs when a person is harmed specifically in their capacity as a knower (*Epistemic Injustice*, Fricker, 2007). It is an undetected and pernicious form of injustice that tracks extant social and economic injustices and *further* oppresses marginalized and oppressed groups, causing profound harm to their psychologies and material lives. It is thus an injustice that we should be deeply concerned about in all of our anti-racism and racial justice work. It manifests itself in two ways: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice occurs when a hearer gives a deflated level of credibility to a speaker’s word because of an identity prejudice (an identity-prejudicial credibility deficit). Hermeneutical injustice, quite differently, occurs when a structural identity prejudice, or hermeneutical gap, in a shared pool of knowledge resources that we all use to understand society and human experience obscures a significant area of a person’s social experience from collective understanding. To provide a cited, concrete example: before the term “sexual harassment” was introduced in the 1970s to describe what countless women had experienced since time immemorial, many women struggled to put their experiences into words and make them intelligible. This was due, in part, to women having been excluded from fully and equally participating in meaning-making institutions, industries, and processes that make sense of, describe, and explain human experiences, for example, academia, journalism, and the process of developing the English language (Fricker, 2007). The same holds true for Black people, especially Black women, trans, queer, and disabled people.

We want to ensure that when the College is referring to, discussing, or tackling racism (whether it be via its website, external communications, or its initiatives), that it is not causing epistemic injustice. This requires genuinely listening to Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators about what their experiences of anti-black racism and white supremacy are and consistently revisiting your definitional understanding of racism, rethinking it and revising it. Moreover, it requires intentionally making that definitional understanding public, naming it for what it is even if it is difficult to do so, so that it becomes part of the shared pool of knowledge resources that the College community uses to understand human experience, especially the experiences of Black students.

We must have difficult conversations about racism, speaking on the same terms. And, if we do not properly or meaningfully define and name exactly what racism is, we will not be able to promote true understanding and find true solutions.

Truth

We appreciate that the College has underscored the importance of truth and has, itself, in this letter, been an illustration of truth-telling. This is a significant, if not the paramount, step in working towards and attaining racial justice. Nevertheless, part of truth-telling involves not only being explicit and matter of fact about the fact of racism, or earnestly urging white people to assume responsibility, or acknowledging shortcomings, but also explicitly naming these failures, appropriately contextualizing them as systematic and systemic failures when they are, and stating them as such explicitly. This allows Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators to know that they, and their grievances, are seriously heard and seen, which contributes to their overall sense of respect and dignity (sometimes feeling silenced or invisible can cause the greater feeling of pain and injustice than the initial injustice itself). It can be the first step in a more comprehensive and robust restorative justice practice at the College and catalyze a process of healing for Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as the broader College community. It demonstrates that the College understands the depth and complexity of its failures and, thus, the work required to correct them. It keeps these failures (and triumphs) engraved in the shared memory and consciousness of the College community, past, present, and future, which can serve multiple valuable

purposes, such as providing recorded histories that help Black students to understand their present experiences and how to shape the future of their College, or as moral reminders and benchmarks that activate the College community towards engagement. Finally, it demonstrates transparency and allows for accountability, which creates public trust in the institution.

The College duly recognizes the importance of protecting against the erosion of truth and how the erosion of a shared knowledge of reality will deter us from speaking truth. In light of this, we hope that the College understands the importance of protecting the shared knowledge of the reality of the legacy and history of anti-black racism and white supremacy at Amherst; its responses; and, how its decisions have contributed to anti-black racism and white supremacy at Amherst (and, potentially, beyond). This, most recently, includes the following incidents:

1. November 12, 2015: Amherst Uprising held a sit-in at Frost Library “in solidarity with Black students nationwide who experience the daily effects of white supremacy in academia.” The Amherst students expressed that the violence, harassment, and exclusion felt by students at other colleges and universities were also felt by members of their own community. They shared that students had covered a “Black Lives Matter” poster with an “All Lives Matter” poster and hung posters that read “In memoriam of the true victim of the Missouri protest: Free Speech, 1776-2016.” President Martin did not address the campus about these incidents. Although President Martin went to the Library instead of proceeding with her trip to Japan and heard the students’ demands, she ultimately did not give them the apology that they requested for the College’s history of white supremacy.

<https://search.proquest.com/openview/97aa812b962eea520d10a79ca41ee840/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y> (pp. 83-94)

2. January 31, 2016: Amherst College hosted Jeb Bush, who infamously ended affirmative action in Florida. In a video interview that Amherst posted on its website and thus supported, Bush said: “In the creation of our country, we don’t have race as a national identifier, ethnicity, whether you’re born some other place, none of that stuff has mattered. It really is ‘Do you embrace a set of American values?’ and that defines our citizenship.”

[An interview with Jeb Bush - Amherst College - January 31, 2017](#)

3. September 5, 2017: Someone tied and left a noose on Pratt Field. President Martin emphasized that “the noose is a symbol of lynching, a form of racist violence and socially tolerated killing of Black people that occurred from late 19th century to the 1960s . . . a lynching noose generates fear because it represents the use of terror and murder as a form of intimidation and social control. . . . They are unmistakably racist symbols of hate. They have no purpose other than to evoke fear.” She concluded that: “It is imperative that we find out who did this and make sure everyone on and off campus knows that we will not tolerate racist bigotry in any form.”

[Noose Discovery Sparks Campuswide Response | The Amherst Student](#)

[Noose on Our Campus | Letters & Statements](#)

4. March 29, 2019: The Office of Diversity and Inclusion created a “Common Language Guide” that defined “anti-blackness” as “Behaviors, attitudes and practices of people and institutions that work to dehumanize black people in order to maintain white supremacy. Anti-blackness can also be internalized and might show up in black people or black communities in the form of colorism, an elevation of white culture or attempts to separate oneself from black cultural norms.”

[COMMON LANGUAGE GUIDE](#)

After conservative media lambasted the College for producing this Guide ([Release of language guide roils Amherst College campus](#)), President Martin rescinded the Guide and wrote, in part:

“Most Americans live in racially and, to an even greater extent, economically separate neighborhoods and know little about one another’s lived experiences. The Amhersts of the world are trying to prepare graduates to live in community with one another. The alternative is greater division and greater conflict.”

[Response to Common Language Document | Letters & Statements](#)

When members of the Republican Club mocked trans and gender-nonconforming students as a result of the Common Language Guide, President Martin defended them by writing: “There is no doubt that Republican students on campus have their own reasons for feeling marginalized and derided. Too often these individuals are not afforded legitimacy or inclusion by those on the left who reduce members to an objectionable stereotype. These students, too, deserve to feel welcome and be known for who they are as people and as individuals with conservative perspectives.”

[Conflicts on Campus | Letters & Statements](#)

5. April 19, 2019: “From Fall 2000 to Fall 2016, Black faculty were 33 times as likely to be denied tenure as their white colleagues, according to an investigative series by the *Amherst Student*. Alumni sent a letter to President Martin to raise their concerns. President Martin responded, outlining measures that the College is taking to attract, retain, and support faculty members, especially faculty members of color, through the tenure process.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/lack-of-black-doctoral-students/587413/>

The Alumni Letter can be read here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-O4YrbrRALr3YHetSGaHhhF4MDcZvn_VzQGLL0qBjX8/edit

6. April 25, 2019: Amherst College hosted Jeff Sessions to speak in Johnson Chapel for an event organized by the Amherst College Republicans and Young America’s Foundation. President Martin issued a statement that read, in part: “I believe we owe it to ourselves, despite cynical efforts to put us in a defensive posture, to protect the right to expression, even or especially when it hurts to do so, as long as there is no imminent threat of violence or incitement of it.”

[Jeff Sessions to speak on Trump, Republican Party at Amherst College](#)

7. March 7, 2020: Amherst lacrosse players chanted the “n-word” at a Black teammate, who subsequently punched one of the chanters. The previous December, someone drew a swastika on an unconscious person’s forehead at a lacrosse team party and team members circulated images of the incident on social media.

[Men’s Lacrosse Members Involved in Racist Incident| Amherst Student](#)

The response from the College was: “Amherst College has placed its men’s lacrosse program on probation canceling its 2020 postseason along with all formal team gatherings until November following an incident first reported by the *Amherst Student* earlier this month. Apparently, members of the team, the Mammoths, chanted ‘[n-word]’ at a black team member who then punched one of his teammates for the offense. The team members have also been required to take an educational course chosen by provost and dean of the faculty Catherine Epstein, athletic director Don Faulstick and the chief diversity and inclusion officer. . . . college officials fired the team’s head coach of nearly 10 years, Jon Thompson.”

President Martin's response is here:

<https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/president/statements/node/767582>

The Black Student Union (BSU) wrote an op-ed here:

[Amherst College Is Ill-Equipped to Handle Racist Violence and Threats of Racist Violence](#)

Then, the BSU wrote an update on President Martin acceding to some anti-racist demands:

<https://www.amherststudent.com/article/integrateamherst-an-update-on-progress>

We believe that the College's response to several of these past incidents of anti-black racism and white supremacy have been neither sufficient nor consistent with the College's avowed respect for the dignity of Black students much less their sense of safety, inclusion, empowerment, and ownership in the College community. We urge the College to heed its own wisdom: risk more in confronting the truth and creating an environment where Black students can take their safety for granted, assume that they will enjoy equal opportunity, and get justice; and, resist the assumption that the onus to fight for this, in the first instance, should be on Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Responsibility

We appreciate and accept your call to action to work together as a community. We also appreciate your follow-up communication providing resources, actions, and initiatives that the College plans to implement going forward to begin this process. On our part, we would like to propose ideas on steps that we urge the College to take.

We would like to begin by acknowledging the significant efforts of Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators at the College, particularly the BSU, in advocating for Black students and holding the College accountable for anti-black racism and white supremacy; expressing our gratitude for their courage and determination; and, with deference, reiterating the BSU's demands, which President Martin has committed to:

1. Accelerating the creation of an institutional Bias Reporting and Response Protocol (initially agreed upon to be completed by Fall 2020).
2. Implementing changes in the Code of Conduct that will detail policy and forms of accountability for race-based harassment and the use of racial epithets against students of color.
3. Dean Catherine Epstein and the Committee of Six revising both of the College's Statements of "Academic and Expressive Freedom" and "Freedom of Expression and Dissent" to address hateful speech.
4. Expanding the Restorative Practices Initiative into a full-fledged, campus-wide program with an update by the beginning of the Fall semester and a program ready for Spring 2021.
5. Ongoing training and assessment for changes in education and training for orientation, student staff, and organization leaders, as well as sustained training for athletic teams and coaches.

In addition to these commitments, and in light of President Martin's communications, we urge the College to commit to the following:

1. A public statement of apology to current and former Black students for having "not done enough at the College to ensure their freedom from racist bias, even racist acts, much less to ensure their sense of belonging and equal ownership of the culture and life of the College" with an explicit cataloging of the moments and ways in which the College has failed to do enough for Black

students in the past. We hope that this statement will include a promise to remain resolute, in the face of attacks, in the College's revived commitment to addressing anti-black racism at Amherst and fostering a just, equitable, and intellectually engaging educational environment for Black students. We believe that, given the emotional, psychological, and material impact that racism and racist acts can have on Black people, particularly during this moment, it is not enough to merely acknowledge that the College has not done enough. It is imperative that the College express its sincere remorse for such failure not only to publicly recognize and help restore the dignity of Black students who have suffered as a result, but also to start their process of healing. This is more than an exercise in contrition or empathy; we have all seen, in this moment, how the refusal of this country to sincerely apologize and atone for its failures has resulted in unimaginable pain, grief, and consequences for Black people.

2. A biennial public hearing (available for in-person and/or virtual attendance by current Black students, faculty, and alumni *only*), in which current Black students and faculty testifiers have the opportunity to address issues concerning race, anti-black racism, and white supremacy at the College, by sharing their experiences, concerns, and recommendations for solutions. Testifiers will provide written testimonies in advance of their oral testimonies, their oral testimonies being abridged. Members of the College Panel for this hearing will have the opportunity to ask questions. The College must provide a written report on its findings from the hearing to students, faculty, and alumni and its planned concrete actions and solutions in response, which should take into full and serious account the experiences, concerns, and recommendations of the testifiers.
3. A plan outlining greater reporting and accountability mechanisms for students, faculty, and alumni with respect to initiatives and steps being taken by the College (including, but not limited to, the work of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion) to address anti-black racism and white supremacy on campus; diversity, equity, and inclusion of Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators; and Black faculty recruitment, retention, and tenure. This should include a systematized method in which students, faculty, and alumni can respond to initiatives and reports from the College.

In relation to this, we request a follow-up report on the progress of the measures that the College is taking to attract, retain, and support faculty members, especially Black faculty members, through the tenure process, as outlined in its May 13, 2019 response to an alumni letter spearheaded by Ian Shin '06. Only 4% of the Amherst faculty is Black; this data is not publicly available on the College website therefore we also call for increased transparency around faculty-related data.

Additionally, we request a report explaining the process and data around the recruitment, training, and promotion into leadership positions of Black staff and administrators.

We also request a report on the College's specific efforts in terms of academic advising and support for Black students and career exploration and planning support for Black students (including, but not limited to, the College's "Post-Graduation Planning for First-Generation and/or Low-Income Students" initiatives outlined on the College website).

4. We request that the College review the composition of the Counseling Center Staff. Currently, out of the 13 members on Staff, only 1 has a clinical interest in "conflicts around race, culture, and ethnicity" and that individual is a Black man. In light of this, we urge the College to hire a psychologist that has and can counsel students experiencing racial trauma, in addition to serving the entire College community, and we recommend that the College make an effort to recruit a Black woman or woman of color. This hiring should be made in consultation with or based on information collected from students of color, especially Black students, about their experiences and their mental and emotional health needs.
5. We applaud the College's new initiatives with respect to intellectual engagement and learning, workshops, and events shared with us in your June 4, 2020 communication. We reiterate that the College should develop all of these initiatives in collaboration with and under the leadership and

advisement of the faculty of the Black Studies Department and the BSU, and urge the College to provide announcements and promotion of these initiatives via all College media platforms in a sustained and meaningful manner. We also request an annual report on the implementation and development of these initiatives, particularly Catherine Epstein's call for and support of new interdisciplinary courses at Amherst on race and racism in the United States; the creation of a catalog of current offerings (which we believe should occupy a conspicuous position on the College website other than just the "Office of Diversity and Inclusion" section of the website); the development of a speaker series featuring prominent historians on the history of race and racism in the United States; the virtual programming being offered commencing June 2020; the staff and faculty workshop on white identity and allyship; and the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty and Office of Diversity and Inclusion's academic presentation on race and racism.

6. Relatedly, and in light of commitment (5) above, we strongly urge the College to develop and implement a substantive anti-racist pedagogical initiative as part of its annual first-year orientation programming (if the anti-racist pedagogical initiatives proposed on June 4, 2020 do not include first-year orientation). We believe that this is, without question, an educational imperative, and a moral one if the College is truly committed to ensuring the teaching, promulgating, and embodiment of its values across the College. Such an initiative would not be inconsistent with past practices in terms of exposing first-year students to timely and important social issues occurring around the world. Before matriculating to Amherst, the entering class, in 2006, received summer reading about the genocide in Darfur. During orientation, those first-year students attended a keynote address on the situation in Darfur delivered by the President of a renowned international organization; the keynote was based on the reading. Then, there were a number of workshops covering various topics and the students engaged in thematic discussions. We suggest that the College adopt a similar model to teach and orient students, early on in their time at Amherst, to issues concerning race, racism, bias, prejudice, discrimination, and social justice.

If we understand racism as fundamentally a type of ideology, that is, "a widely set of loosely associated beliefs and implicit judgements that misrepresent significant social realities and that function, through distortion, to bring about or perpetuate unjust social relations" ("Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," Shelby, 2014), then the College will recognize, even more, why a pedagogical initiative on race, racism, and social justice during first-year orientation is indispensable to the overall educational objective and experience at Amherst. "Racism is a set of misleading beliefs and implicit attitudes about 'races' or race relations whose wide currency serves a hegemonic social function." (Shelby, 2014) What better place than an institution of higher education to help people undo and unlearn "misrepresented social realities," "distortions," and "misleading beliefs"; or, at the very least, to teach histories, lessons, and values of freedom, equality, unity, and justice; or, if we should be so bold, through our teaching, to contribute to the process of correcting or preventing societal injustices and changing the world, and cultivating agents to do the same. We, Amherst, have the tools, resources, and great minds to do this. We just need the will.

And, we sincerely recognize a will on the part of the College through the announcement of its (re)new(ed) pedagogical attention and initiatives on racism. We are simply encouraging and asking the College to go a step further; to be bolder; more intentional; more focused; deeper — and, to then institutionalize that mindset and action. It is to the benefit of the College to do this. It should indeed be an objective of the College to spread the values of its stated mission rather than allowing for the potential spread of incorrect and insidious beliefs. That mission is to "[educate] students of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so that they may seek, value, and advance knowledge, engage the world around them, and lead principled lives of consequence."

Ideological belief systems can change over time, and these changes usually occur as responses to economic, political, and cultural shifts, and, most significantly, social criticism (Shelby, 2014). For example, explicit beliefs, based in science, about the intrinsic inferiority of Black people were prevalent during chattel slavery and Jim Crow. The agents of the abolitionist and Civil Rights movements challenged these beliefs and discredited the faulty racist science upon which they

were grounded. Amherst can be the place that educates and cultivates these agents. When scientific racism was debunked, beliefs and implicit judgements about the cultural and behavioral pathologies of Black people developed and became more commonly invoked to explain why Black people remain in low positions throughout American society or to jettison corrective justice measures (Shelby, 2014). These contemporary beliefs and implicit judgements are not *different* racist ideologies; they are newly *constituted* ones (Shelby, 2014). Ideological beliefs will always attempt to find faulty apparatuses upon which to ground themselves and faulty loci within which to embed themselves. Amherst's education and cultivation of social change agents must thus be continuous.

Ideologies are generally attributed to social groups, entire societies, or historical periods rather than individuals (Shelby, 2014). These commonly held beliefs and implicit judgments underpin and legitimize stratified social, political, and economic orders (Shelby, 2014). Most people, unfortunately, absorb—through the various media, schools, family, societal practices and rituals, or other institutions that socialize and indoctrinate us—these beliefs and implicit judgments and accept them as *a priori* truths (Shelby, 2014). These *a priori* truths are held often without full consciousness and are automatically and unconsciously relied upon as people engage in social interactions (Shelby, 2014). Thus, even the most liberal and progressive person can come to learn that she has internalized racial stereotypes and biases. Amherst can help students to become more conscious and raise consciousness; can challenge students to interrogate the validity of these *a priori* truths; and can encourage students to be critical about the world around them and support them in their own self-analyses.

Ideological beliefs and implicit judgments construct, undergird, and sustain institutional structures, social systems, and cultural norms. Unless we change those beliefs, even if we dismantle structures, systems, and norms, those beliefs will continue to spread throughout society and eventually seep through the porous infrastructures of other structures, systems, and norms to influence them, or create new ones. The true locus of transformation and justice are in the belief system. Amherst must work to ensure that it constructs (and then protects and sustains) the correct and a robust belief system from the start. We believe it prudent for the College to focus its time and attention on building this rather than having to ultimately respond to the problems resulting from fractures in an underdeveloped, unstable, or, worse, unsound—and thus vulnerable—belief system.

As noted above, ideological belief systems have epistemic deficiencies, closely connected to oppressive social consequences (Shelby, 2014). “They make faulty claims to knowledge; they mislead and distort; they create and spread myths; they misinform and conceal. Most importantly, they legitimate group dominance through their misrepresentations” (Shelby, 2014). Amherst, as a producer and bastion of knowledge, has epistemic authority and thus an epistemic duty and responsibility concomitant with a social one. And, we must lead by example.

Finally, and most importantly, the College's stated mission is to “bring together the most promising students . . . to promote diversity of experience and ideas.” For many students, Amherst College will be the first place where they are being exposed to and interacting with people from different backgrounds and cultures, as well as stretching, challenging, and shaping their minds in new and significant ways, and the very first place where that begins to happen is orientation. Amherst must open and enlighten their minds; orient them to the issues at home (in addition to abroad); and encourage them to not only learn about and understand them but also to genuinely care about them, changing them for the better.

As your June 4, 2020 communication eloquently states: “This is a pivotal moment in the nation's history and an opportunity to join together to fight systemic racism, racist prejudices, and discrimination. The goal of a liberal arts education is to fight prejudice and ignorance with knowledge and understanding, changing the world for the better.” We share this view and want to ensure that the College institutionalizes this ethos of enlightening students' minds so that they can give light to the world—giving continued meaning to *terras irradiant*.

7. We urge the College to reinstate the Common Language Guide and ensure that it is readily accessible on a prominent part of the College website. Alternatively, we urge the College to draft a new document that meets the original purpose, issue, or concern that the Common Language Guide was originally intended to address. We are concerned about the set of events surrounding the removal of the Common Language Guide (as outlined above); thus, if the College decides against reinstating the Common Language Guide or creating a new document, we, at the very least, request follow-up on the reasons for such decision and what is being done to address the original need.
8. A plan of action for addressing the lack of racial, socioeconomic, and generational representation on the Board of Trustees. Currently, the Board comprises 15 white men ('66, '69, '76, '77, '78, '81, '83, '84, '85, '87, '89, '90, '91, '93, '96) out of its 25 members. This does not reflect the diversity of the College and it is important that a diversity of background and thought be present at the highest level of decision-making at the College.
9. We would like to discuss and work with the College to establish an Alumni Diversity Council to allow for more alumni involvement, support, and collaboration. We recognize that there is a lot of work ahead, hard work. We offer ourselves as partners. We know that everything cannot be done by the College alone. We appreciate that everything will not happen overnight. Most importantly, we understand that, institutionally, there will inevitably be some experiential and epistemic limitations. This is not an indictment. It is simply a reality that we all must humbly acknowledge. And, with that same humility, we recognize that you will require some form of guidance from your community. We are part of that community.

The College, in its own mission statement, attests to the fact that “[i]ts graduates link learning with leadership—in service to the College, to their communities, and to the world beyond.” We have all gone out and served our communities and the world in a myriad of ways. We want to equally be of service to the College. And, we can be. We have all gone out into the world and amassed a wealth of knowledge and life experiences that we can give back to the Amherst community. As with any other identity, the experience of being black in America, or a person of color, is not something you can learn. It is an experiential matter. We thus have an experiential and epistemic standpoint, and in many cases a vantage point, that is unique, rich, and valuable. We can use who we are, what we know, and what we have learned from our life experiences to enrich and support the work of the College.

We also want to ensure that the public commitment that the College has made to the Amherst College community does not become diluted or misdirected in any way. Hence, we state, unequivocally, our belief that Black leadership from the students to the faculty to the staff to the administrators, all the way to the alumni, should be driving the anti-racist project at Amherst College with clear support and sponsorship from the College. At the crux of any anti-racist project is the doctrine that white people must relinquish their privilege and power to allow space and access for marginalized and oppressed groups. We sincerely hope that Amherst will allow the Black alumni who, too, are part of this Amherst family to support and, along with Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators, to lead this hard work ahead. We are willing and ready to do the work.

Implicit in the notion of assuming responsibility is the concept of leadership and the act of taking initiative. As one of the leading educational institutions in America and a world-class educational institution that has produced an impressive amount of notable college founders and presidents; presidents, prime ministers, and other heads of national government; cabinet members in governments around the world; a U.S. Supreme Court Justice; diplomats, governors, senators, congressmembers, and other government officials; lawyers and judges; clergy and Biblical scholars; businesspeople; Nobel Prize winners; Pulitzer Prize winners; MacArthur Fellowship winners; National Medal of Science winners; physicians, astronauts, engineers, inventors, and scientists; and authors, artists, and entertainers—those who have and will

continue to be the decisionmakers and changemakers in this world—your responsibility is not only to Black students at Amherst College but also to the greater society.

This is the Amherst story. And, it is an intellectually and culturally rich one.

“Our story is your story. Since 1821, we’ve been helping our students find their own voices, discover their own truths and forge their own paths in the world. Our students and alumni are the true authors of the Amherst story. Help write our next chapter.”

This is a pivotal moment to write that next chapter. We look forward to working together to assume that responsibility and continue the legacy of Amherst College that we all cherish.

Sincerely,

Chaka S. Laguerre '08

Candy Martinez '10

Donatella Galella '09

Yasmin Navarro '10

Christopher Gillyard '08

Ross Wolfarth '08

Angelica Cesario '08

Titania (Tanya) Jackson '10

Justin David Blanset '07

Ashley Armato '08

Ashley Soto '11

Lee Moulton '07

Michelle Dvoskin '00

Lisa M. Smith '09

Harold David (Aarons) '10

Ilana Ventura '12

Crysta Song '14

Molly Doyle '11

Amanda Rodriguez-Newhall '12

Anna Savage '12

Nicole Navarro '12

Nicholas Brentley '06

Tatiana Tucker (Butler) '10

Alexandre White '10

Jeff Tucker '09

Zachary Cutler '07

Rasheda Jasmin Vereen '10

Lenore Bell '08

Kellie (McEvoy) du Preez '05

Kate Berry '12

Carlissa King '11

Callie Kwartler (Fogler) '07

Laken King '11

Jonathan T. Mosley '01

Benjamin Dickman '08

Teri Harris Peebles '01

Cyndy Jean '07

Anne (Atwell-McLeod) Merkel '08

Rosalyn “Roz” Foster '05

Stephanie Yesnik '09

Dan Cluchey '08

Rachel Adelstein '99

Kelly King (Tellis-Warren) '10

Elliot Kuan '18

William Pruitt '07

Joanna Rifkin '09

Bonnie E. Lin '08E

Anna Patricia Castro Argueta '12

Zoe Fenson '09

Marissa Drehobl '09

Katherine (Chen) Abrikian '08

Katherine Choi '07

Kirby (Schell) Williams '06

Vincent DiForte '10

Lynne Baer '00

Elle Chimiak '09

Jessica Lee Chung '06

Joanne Joo '04

Matthew Dougherty '08

Michael Chernicoff '09

Julia Pike '19

Andrea Gyorody '07

Katherine Wu '10

Anri Chomentowska '18

Brendan Horton '08

Kelley Baumann '19

Emmalie Dropkin '07

Sarah Duffy '14

Kayleigh O'Keefe '12

Christina Guilbeau '13

Izzy Mahoney '09

Jed Bernstein '08

Richa Bhala '08

Keylee Miracle Sampson '20

Eden F. Charles '19

Saugat Kandel '12

Fabián Rivera Reyes '19

Helena Burgueño '19

Fabiana Kreines '12

Tené Adero Howard '01

Semret Yibass '15

Daniel Alter '13

Katherine Duke '05

Lucy Zhou '10

Malia Chan '09

Augusta Hollers '19

Simon Essig Aberg '19

Rachel Cohen '19

Borun Sun '18

Allison Tennant '19

Ariana Robey-Lawrence '12

Matthew Holliday '19

Denise H. Lee '01

Rebecca Eppler-Epstein '12

Tracy Montgomery '10

Evan W. C. Nabrit '06E

Surya Kundu '09

Jordan E. McKay '07

Gudrun Juffer '08
Siona Francesca van Dijk '03
Maudlyn Obi '11
Natashia D. Hines '07
Katerina Byanova '09
Patrice Peck '09
Taylor Pelletier '19
Brian Smith '12
Mark E. Hayes '91
Jennifer (Roberge) Chudy '07
Cara Dorsey '12
Rebecca A. Binder '02
Bryan Doniger III '18
Karen Wasserstein Engelman '18
Sara Softness '09
Gillian Woldorf '01
Katherine M. Tezanos '12
Cindy Li '12
Austin Yim '08
Ivonne Ortega '12
Sarah Marks '09
Alexandra Hadley '07
Caroline Rives (Richman) '13
Malcolm McClain '13
Jade McKnight '13
Hilary Palevsky '07
Kyle Boatwright '09
CJ Holmes '09
Kevin Soltau '01
Anthony Paz '08
Miriam Feese (Bernstein) '10
Jason Nino '05
Jada Palmer '19
Christopher Conroy '05
Danielle Amodeo '13
Katherine Perry Blumstein '13
Uchechi Onyebuchi '15
Rachel Edelman '09
Kristin Beneski '08
Jane Bragdon '20
Leah Cerf '13
Venise Crawford '11
Jenny Li '16
Sienna Tinsley '08
Erika J. Pettersen '08
Laura Trigeiro '06
Anaid Reyes '08
Shantel Watters-Rogers '09
Idris McClain '07
Romulo Cabeza '08
Freya Riedlin '09
Keyonte Sutherland '07
Charlotte Owens '15
Diane Lee '19
Jasmine Eucogco '06
Sarah Palmore '15

Hanna Campbell '07	Cassidy Fitzpatrick Carlson '08
Maïkha Jean-Baptiste '10	Paola Ligondé '08
Jamie Mattison '10	Jaime Botero '08
Isabella J. Berkley '19	Gina Ringelberg '13
Makaula A. Bam '10	Bethany (Brown) Goodson '12
Lorena Rodriguez '13	Nazir Savji '08
Jennifer Romanowicz, M.D. '09	Joe Addison '09
Krystyn Elek '10	Claire Rann '08
Jessica Rhoades '09	Nicholas DePina '03
Claire (Holton-Basaldua) Olin '09	Annette Sanderson '82
Jonathon Attridge '08	Noel Hahn '07
Henry Landis '17	Kelly King '08
Mark Donaldson '09	Hayin (Kim) Kimner '99
Emmanuel Ashamu '04	Jennifer Rybak Kiernan '10
Renee M. Chung '07	Lucy Sheehan '08
Matthew Randolph '16	Miu Suzuki '16
Carlos Adolfo Gonzalez Sierra '14	Ryan Shields '08
Brandi Sinclair '07	Christina Hopkins '10
Daniel Calvert '09	Kyla Kitamura '08
Christina Nieves '10	Isabel Duarte-Gray '09
Simone Brown '19	Peter Tang '10
Michael LaRiviere '08	Adam Alfandary '10
Nathan Ives '18	Laura Kim '06
Jeffrey Grover '09	Suzanne Hulick Mitchell '09
Samantha Ender '01E	Catherine Champion '09
Ian Shin '06	Chibuzo Uwakaneme '11
Khalilah Licorish Iraheta '08	Mattie Baker '09
Ceridwen Cherry '06	Heather Richard '13

Jae Hee Chang '05	Esther Lim '05
Robert Owen Williams '91E	Jacob Maguire '07
Marika Joyce Hashimoto '06	Irisdelia Garcia '18
Zoe Wong '18	Janet Foster '08
Anthony Abraham Jack '07	Nelly C. Almeida '05
Sebatatso C. Manoeli '11	Ellen Ferrin '07
Tamara Stewart '00	Darryl Weimer '10
Stephanie Kyle-Brown (Brown) '07	Steve Shashy '08
Halimah Hamidu '12	Emily Silberstein '06
Amy Miller '08	Jennifer Collins '08
Kathleen Kinlan Boucher-Lavigne '08	Brandon C. Jones '08
Lorelei Dietz '20	Juan Enrique Davila '06
Raina Sutton '09	Laura Vincent Smith '09
Kavitha Mediratta '87	Nancy Song '08
Alexandra Maus '06	Rubii Tamen '19
Maya Foster '23	Carla Kim '08
Virginia Lora '08	Timothy Lee '18
Holly Saltrelli '09	Stephanie Gounder '08
Danielle Fregia '17	Andrew Segoshi '08
Anna Meyendorff '09	Jessica Hernandez '12
Christina Elena Clemente '06	Lauren Benjamin '17
Priyanka Kumar '13	Charlene Dy '03
Marissa Bates '11	Darrian Kelly '15
Estefania Gonzalez (Colon) '11	Jean C. Chung(Lee) '81
Max Suechting '11	Taela Brooks '06
Demma Rosa Rodriguez '04	Heather Wilson '08
Ayyappan Venkatraman '09	Christopher Temerson '11
Josh Nathan '10	Timothy Cheng '07

Luke Menard '12	Timothy L. Adkins-Jones (Jones) '04
Michael Britt '10	Lucille Jun '08
Daniel Rivera '14	Joe Wing Lee '04
Joshua Stanton '08	Ruth Baldwin '04
Benjamin Merewitz '08	Phil Jones '04
Rachel Dunham '05	Sabato Visconti '09
Richard André '09	Douglas Hongkee Min '84
Vidya Raghavan '04	Jordan D Bowling, MD '05
Angela G. Brown '07	Christopher Spaide '11
Melissa Moulton '09	Trenati Baker '20
Jennifer Yeh '10	Eboni Jones '06
Malcolm Peyton-Cook '10	Megan O'Neill '07
Greg Curreri '09	Anna Reid '10
Nicholas Lynch '09	Maya Sisneros '13
Victoria Ruvkun '19	Emily Figueroa '11
Greg Genco '10E	Julie Wright '10
Mari N. Crabtree '03	Eric Hsu '09
Joseph Nwadiuko '08	Hilary Lewis '06
Eunice Park '04	Taamiti Bankole '06
Nat Smith '11	Peter Harrison '11
Laura Barker '07	Deborah Raji, '06
Trevor Lewis '10	Phillip Maciak '05
Ashley McCall '12	Tessa McEvoy '16
Silvia Sabino '04	Nora Handsher '08
Kiko Aebi '16	Rachel Greenberg '09
Gabrielle Ferrer '05	Teana White '10
Daniel Edelman '09	Avery Armour '08
Somaliyah Al-Mahdi '09	Gloria Monfrini '07

Kimberly Tsu Kwei '04

Matthew Goldsmith '08

Danielle Lewis '07E

Julia Hazel Powers '06

Gina Isabel Rodriguez '10

Sharon Kim '10

Pierre Joseph '15

David Beck '07

Edward Daniel Young, III '77

Jennifer Ho '08

Margaret Hass '07

Halley E.M. Riley, MPH '08

Erin Chung '09

Jennifer Estrada '08

Katherine Latham '06

Reginald Fugett '11

Patrick Savage '07

Emma Feinstein '05

Nora Gray '05

Dana R. Woods '86

Christine R. Cain '86

Justin Wiley '09

Susanna An '14E

Andrew Edelman '15

Melissa Aybar '14

Anne-France Pierre '10

Lindsey Call '19

Deidra Montgomery '10

Allison McGill '10

Rachel Maclay '01

Victoria Simoes Beck '07

Narendra Joshi '13

Nneya Richards '08

Dominique de Vastey '07

Charmel Maynard '07

Laura Smith '08

Linder Lane '80

Jeffrey Suliveres '20

Ashley J. Finigan '08

Jean S Fugett Jr '72

Elizabeth Wilkes '08