



Associated Students of
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ASWWU Statement: Our commitments to dismantling anti-Blackness

Bellingham, WA — In response to the criticisms brought forward by Black students over the past years, we want to acknowledge that the Associated Students of Western Washington University has **failed** our Black students, consistently. We have turned a blind eye to the struggles and the pain of Black students on our campuses, tokenized their voices when it was convenient to us and exploited their pain. We have stayed silent, as complaints of anti-Blackness within our organizations were ignored over the many years and ignored the issue to the point where our Black students do not feel safe in our spaces.

First and foremost, The ASWWU would like to apologize to our Black students. We didn't listen to you, we broke your trust, and we could have done so much better to support you. The ASWWU recognizes that an apology- or even a statement- means nothing if it is not backed by actions. Therefore we would like to commit to the following actions below to support our students now, and forever.

The ASWWU Executive Board directly communicated with the Faculty Senate and presented the document titled “Steps faculty can take to support Black students”, that was supported by the boards of the Black Student Union and African Caribbean Club. This document was passed during the Faculty Senate’s meeting on June 1, 2020, and posted for all faculty to access on the Faculty Senate blog.

WE CALL ON EACH OFFICE OF THE ASWWU TO COMMIT TO THESE ACTIONS:

1. **Evaluate our Hiring Process.** Specifically looking at why Black students typically do not end up in paid positions all across the Associated Students and find ways to improve our advertising of job availabilities outside of peers who are familiar with the ASWWU.
2. **Change our AS Office Events.** For events that are hosted and funded by AS offices, make sure that we bring Black artists and Black speakers- not just people that profit off of Black culture. We must commit to doing this all year- NOT just during Black History Month.

3. **Individually Admit to Our Wrongdoings.** This is a call for every AS Office to utilize their social media platform to share information that advocates and educates the public about Black Lives Matter and racial injustices globally. As well as on June 19, use social media to educate the importance of Juneteenth, and commit to improve at least one systematic barrier in connection to the office.
4. **Mend the Broken Promises.** This is specifically a request for the Multi Cultural Center to commit to their promise of publicly acknowledging the erasure of Black History during the MCC Grand Opening, and the ESC as a whole during the October 22nd, 2019 meeting with Black students.
5. **Create a Black Student Coalition.** First, create a Queer and Trans Black Student Initiative housed under LGBTQ+ Western that is connected to the ASWWU. Upon the creation of this initiative, create a Black Student Coalition that connects the Black Male Initiative, the Black Student Union, the African Caribbean Club, the National Society of Black Engineers, and the Black Womxn Group, and the Queer and Trans Black Student Initiative to direct funding dollars.
6. **Improve Western Alerts.** Specifically in instances with white supremacists groups in the Bellingham Area, work with administration to make the process so the Western Alert system can inform students about potential dangers faster.
7. **Require professionally facilitated anti-Blackness training.** As we have failed to invest in any training during quarterly staff AS training for our white and non-Black employees and commit to prioritizing these conversations and reflections.
8. **Stop using the terms "POC" and Black interchangeably.** As well as educating ourselves on how the language we use contributes to the anti-Black society.
9. Both of the ASWWU Student governing bodies recognize that our **meeting structures are deeply rooted in white supremacy and perpetuate anti-Blackness through Robert's Rules of Order.** We recognize that Robert's Rules of Order are inherently inaccessible and both ASWWU student governing bodies commit to reevaluating and searching for a new meeting structure in order to prioritize Black student voices.
10. **ASWWU must do more and step away from "cosmetic diversity"**¹. ASWWU recognizes that it is not enough to have Black bodies in our spaces without committing to include Black minds, philosophies and insights.
11. **We will hold our professional staff accountable** to actively work to dismantle white supremacy alongside us. We ask that they do the same for student employees by

¹ Ko, Aph, and Syl Ko. *Aphro-Isim: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*. Vancouver, B.C.: Langara College, 2019.



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recognizing their vital role in this as positions without yearly turnover. **We ask them to take on this work collectively and not burden our Black professional staff.**

12. The ASWWU commits to using its legislative power and resources **to advocate for defunding police forces on our campus and local communities.**
13. The ASWWU commits to **QUARTERLY individual office assessments** to hold the internal workings of the AS accountable to these calls to action.
 - a. A pre-, during, post- assessment to recognize the accomplishments but also places of growth
14. The ASWWU commits to **YEARLY organization wide assessments** to hold the organization accountable to these calls to action. This will also ensure that past shortfalls will not be repeated.

The ASWWU mission is that we are "by students, for students" but we recognize that we cannot say we are 'for students' if we do not support our Black students.

Black Lives Matters, all the time. Not just when it is trending.