

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

Resolution 5:
On the forthcoming campus climate Task Force

**Sponsored by: Jesse Goldberg, GPSA Arts & Humanities Voting Member;
GPSA Diversity and International Students Committee**

Whereas, President Martha Pollack sent a letter to the entire Cornell community on September 17th via an email titled “Message to the Cornell Community,” in which one of the plans she articulates is, “I will convene a Presidential Task Force charged with examining and addressing persistent problems of bigotry and intolerance at Cornell. The task force will identify the problems that are preventing us from being a fully welcoming and inclusive community and make specific recommendations about how our community can move forward with greater respect, understanding and inclusivity. This week I will meet with student, faculty and staff leaders to refine the task force’s charge and to discuss membership;”¹ and

Whereas, on Thursday September 21, the Student Assembly passed Resolution 8;² and

Whereas, on Monday September 25, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly passed Resolution 4 in support of that SA Resolution; and

Whereas, we stand behind the clauses of those documents within this present Resolution; and

Whereas, the problems of racism, xenophobia, sexism, queerantagonism, ableism, classism, settler colonialism, and other forms of marginalization against historically oppressed or disenfranchised peoples are irreducible to problems of individual psychology or feeling such as personal bigotry or intolerance; and

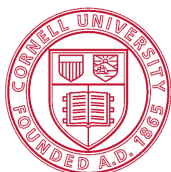
Whereas, decades of research in the humanities and social sciences have demonstrated that solving problems of violence (understood broadly to encompass more than only physical attacks) across human difference requires attention to systems of power and oppression in which individuals are embedded, as well as the mindsets of individuals themselves; and

Whereas, Cornell’s Graduate and Professional Student community values diversity of all forms, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical, mental, and psychological ability, and socioeconomic status or background; and

Whereas, we believe that any meaningful, persistent change will require building an inclusive community that is based in equity, dignity, and mutual respect for the varied ways in which individuals are impacted by their social identities within said community,

¹ <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2017/09/president-issues-statement-recent-racial-incidents>

² <https://assembly.cornell.edu/resolutions/sa-r8-condemning-hate-crimes-and-hate-speech-and-support-students>



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Be it therefore resolved, that the GPSA formally acknowledges its support of President Martha Pollack's letter to the community and thanks her for leadership in crafting a prompt response; and

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA also acknowledges that many of the ideas expressed in "Message to the Cornell Community" have been articulated both formally and informally by groups of marginalized students – undergraduate, graduate, and professional – across campus over the past few years;³ and

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA advocates for each of the constituent assemblies of the University Assembly to commit to including at least one Marginalized Communities Representative amongst their four representatives; and

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA calls on President Pollack to include *structural and systemic oppression and inequity* alongside the more interpersonal terms "bigotry and intolerance" in the official charge of the Task Force she will form; and

Be it further resolved, that in the spirit of attending to structural and systemic oppression and inequality, the Task Force be charged with grounding its analysis of diversity and inclusion in analyses of historical imbalances of material power, such that focus remains on modes of human difference mediated by such power imbalances rather than the simple fact of difference; and

Be it further resolved, that the Task Force be explicitly tasked with thinking through an intersectional framework of analysis, where intersectionality is understood in its robust sense as a theory of power and forces of violence and discrimination rather than thinly as an idea of additive identity;⁴ and

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA calls on President Pollack to form a Task Force that is representative of marginalized voices on campus, where we understand that such a task force cannot, for example, be comprised of a majority of male-identifying or white individuals; and

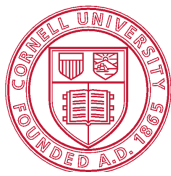
Be it further resolved, that said Task Force be of an adequate size as to include both graduate and professional students from multiple target identity affinity groups, including at least one

³ For just one wide-scope compilation of previous iterations of the ideas expressed in Pollack's email, as well as many other useful qualitative data sets and concrete recommendations, see "The Climate for Diversity at Cornell University: Student Experiences" full report from 2014:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d4ca/5d597841e22def390f2f9fab2b7ca3fdb754.pdf>

⁴ See essays by Kimberle Crenshaw, including "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics" (*Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, edited by Katherine T. Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy, Westview Press, 1991, pgs. 57-80); and "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" (*Stanford Law Review* Vol 43, 1993, pgs. 1241-1249). For a shorter, but still rigorous and lucid elaboration, see "'We're all just different!' How Intersectionality is Being Colonized by White People":

<https://thinkingraceblog.wordpress.com/2017/04/24/were-all-just-different-how-intersectionality-is-being-colonized-by-white-people/>



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Black graduate student representative and one Black professional student representative at the recommendation of Black Graduate and Professional Student Association, Black Law Student Association, Black Graduate Business Student Association, and Cornell Veterinary Students as One in Culture and Ethnicity; and

Be it further resolved, that said Task Force also include one Latinx graduate student representative and one Latinx professional student; and

Be it further resolved, that said Task Force also include one graduate student and one professional student from other marginalized communities; and

Be it further resolved, that the Task Force be directed to hold regular public meetings/forums during which community members can be informed on the progress of the Task Force and provide feedback; and

Be it finally resolved, that efforts to consciously reject and deconstruct systemic oppression within the Cornell community be a consistent and ongoing priority of the administration, not to be limited by the timeline of any Task Force charged with these issues, or by the recommendations made by such a Task Force.

Respectfully Submitted,

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