



A Texas Model

To the UT Austin community:

We mourn the tragic losses of Black life in recent months, including the murders of George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Michael Ramos, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other unarmed people of color. These injustices have occurred against the backdrop of a global pandemic that has taken a disproportionate toll on Black communities, resulting in tremendous loss of life and laying bare longstanding structural inequities. As scholars of the humanities, we know that these deaths are not anomalous events. Racism, and in particular anti-blackness, is woven into this country's DNA, embedded in our institutions and reinforced in our everyday practices.

At its core, the Mellon Engaged Scholar Initiative is founded on the belief that scholarship and civic engagement must be intertwined, not separate, domains. An engaged scholar is one who listens, collaborates, and actively participates in civic life. In keeping with these values, we stand firmly with the Black Lives Matter movement. We recognize the crucial role that Black LGBTQ activists have played in co-founding and sustaining this movement, while acknowledging the high levels of violence aimed at Black trans women. We denounce systemic racism in all its guises: police violence, mass criminalization, covert racial biases, and the myriad forms of structural discrimination that lead to premature death. We stand in solidarity with our Black colleagues and with BIPOC communities in Austin, who are on the front lines of this movement and who experience the lived consequences of systemic racism.

For many of us, our early commitments to engaged scholarship were nurtured within Black and ethnic studies departments. As scholars, we have benefited not only from the research these programs produce, but also from the communities they foster and the models of engaged scholar-activism they offer us. These teachers taught us to analyze the roots of structural violence and to connect contemporary events—including the murder of George Floyd and our present moment of civil unrest—to longer histories of oppression and resistance.

At the same time, our education in social justice has trained us to recognize the limitations of the academy as a locus for social change. As scholars at the University of Texas, we must reckon with our place in an institution that has historically perpetuated racist ideologies and excluded racial minorities. We must especially reflect on our place on a campus which, in the words of our own Dr. Edmund Gordon, was birthed from a white supremacist neo-Confederate vision. Furthermore, the connections between our university and police power are not lost upon us. Our university invests in a campus police force in the name of keeping students safe, but we know

that the UTPD is also dispatched to quell campus protests and intimidate student activists. UT collaborates with the Austin Police Department, whose officers shot unarmed protestors with "less-lethal" rounds last weekend, inflicting critical injuries. Simply put, through its investments and collaborations, our flagship state university is complicit in carrying out state violence.

Thus, while we see the university as one point of departure for our scholarly endeavors, our broader visions of public engagement are not bound by this affiliation. As individuals, many of us work with community-based collectives and grassroots initiatives that nourish our empowerment and inform our visions of a more just future. We are proud to build community at UT, while simultaneously recognizing that institutional affiliation is not the defining attribute of our scholarly identities.

Whether or not we are at the frontlines of protest, we the members of the Engaged Scholar Initiative are committed to using our scholarship to engage the public and to educate others about the long, violent histories that shape our present moment. We will continue to demand that the University of Texas at Austin invest in courses that teach the histories of oppressed people, as well as in programs that nurture students' sense of agency and prepare them to pursue social justice work. Within our own program, we resolve to use our substantial grant budget in socially responsible ways. We commit to purchasing books and materials locally, from BIPOC- and women-owned businesses. As we plan official ESI events and invite paid speakers to campus, we will also continue to prioritize community groups whose work redresses social inequities.

Below, we offer a range of resources, including ways to materially contribute, mental health and anti-racist resources, and further reading about local and state histories of racial injustice. Many of us are additionally providing financial, legal, and medical aid to those risking their safety in the fight for human rights. We urge each other and our communities to join in the fight against police brutality and systemic racism.

In solidarity,
The Mellon Engaged Scholar Initiative Fellows & Program Staff

Donate:

- [Austin Justice Coalition](#)
- [Reclaim The Block](#)
- [Black Visions Collective](#)
- [Mutual Aid ATX](#)
- [400+1 Bail Fund \(Austin\)](#)
- [Communities of Color United: Coalition for Racial Justice](#)
- [Youth Rise Texas](#)
- [Grassroots Leadership](#)

- Bail funds organized by state: [The National Bail Fund Network](#)
- Bail funds organized by city: [City Roll Call](#)

To amplify your impact, encourage your friends and loved ones to donate to organizations that work within your community or match a donation that you have made.

Mental Health & Well Being:

- [National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)
- [Sista Afya](#)
- [Therapy for Black Girls](#)
- [The Steve Fund](#)
- [Henry Health](#)
- [The Confess Project](#)
- [The Nap Ministry](#)

Educational Resources & Readings:

- **ACLU:** [Know Your Rights as a Protester](#)
- **National Lawyers Guild:** [Know Your Rights](#)
- **Victoria Alexander:** [Reading list of anti-racist literature](#)
- **Rachel Ricketts:** [Anti-Racism Resources](#)
- **Anti-Oppression LibGuide (Guide to Allyship):** [Allyship-Take Action](#)

Educational Resources & Reading for Children:

- [Thread of Children's Books That Discuss Race & Racism](#)
- **Parent Toolkit:** [How To Talk to Kids About Race & Racism](#)
- **Center For Racial Justice in Education:** [Resources for Talking About Race, Racism, And Racialized Violence with Kids](#)
- **Beyond the Golden Rule:** [A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice](#)

Austin & Texas News/History:

- **Austin Statesman:** [“Austin police still stop black, Hispanic drivers more often.”](#)
- **Austin Statesman:** [Inheriting Inequality](#) (three-part series on the history of racial segregation, disenfranchisement, and economic inequity in Austin)
- **The Atlantic:** [“A secret strategy to keep out Black students”](#) (on UT's “blueprint for slowing integration during the civil rights era”)
- **The Daily Texan:** [“The 5 percent: UT lacks Black representation.”](#)
- **The Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis:** [The State of Black Lives in Texas Initiative](#)