February 27, 2019

We the undersigned faculty in the Department of English wishes to express our full and complete support for students, faculty, and staff who promote racial equality and who seek to end institutional racism through restorative and reparative transformation.

As is now well known in the US and around the world, several recent articles have uncovered racist photographs in the *Howler*, including of students who would later become members of the administration and Board of Trustees standing before a confederate flag, in addition to other offensive images of unnamed students in blackface. At a forum on Thursday, February 21st, students expressed their longstanding frustrations with the ongoing legacy of racism at Wake Forest, which continues to impact university life and campus culture, in ways both deeply personal and institutional. University leaders have offered apologies and statements about doing better, but however well-meaning, we find these responses insufficient.

The study of literature and language teaches us to listen to the perspectives of others, to look at the world through eyes not our own. We call upon the administration to listen to the experiences of black students and students of color, faculty, and staff as a preliminary step before instituting meaningful change. These voices need to be heard and these perspectives need to be acknowledged.

The study of literature and language also compels us to understand how intractable, even traumatic, histories of violence and exclusion persist over time, continuing to shape the present moment in ways that may not be visible to all. We further call upon the university to examine far more thoroughly the ways in which the legacy of slavery and exploitative labor practices have shaped and continue to shape the university and campus culture, affecting us all albeit unevenly. This includes calling upon members of the administration and Board of Trustees to take responsibility and ownership for their participation in and support of racist institutions, including Greek organizations such as Kappa Alpha. Relatedly, further we call upon the university to conduct a thorough investigation into the roles of Greek life in fostering a culture of exclusion, both in the past and in the present.

The study of literature and language can also furnish us with more nuanced forms of language, activating our imagination to contend with the complexities all around us with the hope of transforming our world in the name of democracy and equality. Finally, we call upon the administration to devote even more resources to creating a university environment of inclusion and openness, welcome to all.

The Department of English is committed to the education of all of our students. Academic and intellectual growth can occur only in a campus environment that continuously aspires to be safe, just, and free of the present harm and the historical legacies of racism. In support of that growth, we will continue to stand with students in seeking the transformation of the university.
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