

**standing with heR
List of Demands
to
The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

December 8, 2015

To: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Administrators

standing with heR (SWH) is a collective of Black University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) students, faculty, accomplices, and community members and a Black Lives Matter project. Our collective is structured by both Afro-Pessimist and Black queer frameworks. SWH uses research, litigation, social action, and other forms of advocacy to support Black women and other racially-diverse women and people in holding colleges and universities, as institutional systems of oppression, accountable.

Our name comes from our initial organizing efforts at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which began in 2014, to address the systematic and structural lynching of a Black woman faculty member in the College of Education, which ironically is well-known across campus for its high rates of Black faculty and graduate students. Mark Gado writes in, *Carnival of Death*, "Lynching, does not necessarily mean hanging. It often included humiliation, torture, burning, dismemberment, and castration. Victims were beaten and whipped, many times in front of large crowds that sometimes numbered in the thousands." At its core, her firing was arbitrary, incredibly humiliating, and excessively torturous and violent. **We are standing with heR.**

standing with heR reflects the critical decision we made, at that time, not to name the Black women faculty and students who are under attack by UIUC administration and treated unfairly on campus. Our decision is itself an act of love and protection, as taught by Assata Shakur—"We must love each other and support each other." Safeguarding their privacy is an example of that love and support. Further, to-date we have refrained from using our sisters' names because we have repeatedly been told by University administrators to go public with our protests, we are putting them (and those of us who are Black and woman) at risk. The gratuitous violence exacted against the Black woman faculty member in the College of Education, for whom we are named, represents the violence all Black women at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are constrained by whether they all acknowledge it or not.

As Black students we, and others across the country, are making an immediate connection between the state violence levied against us on US campuses, which takes multiple forms, to the state-sanctioned violence against Black people in the streets that Black Lives Matter activists have been calling attention to in places like Sanford, FL around the death of Trayvon Martin, in Ferguson, MO in the fight for Mike Brown, and the unrest in Waller County Texas, in the wake of the death of Sandra Bland, for example. As these deaths show, in particular Sandra Bland's and others like hers, Black people, Black women are always vulnerable in society. This susceptibility of Black people, Black women to oppression and gratuitous attacks does not escape the ivory tower. With that said, Black students have been organizing around anti-Black racism for decades. We recognize and honor the rich history of Black student organizing at UIUC and beyond, which our contemporary work builds upon.

All, the various organizing efforts across the country, including those on our campus, are connected and structured by the declaration of “Black Lives Matter”. #BlackLivesMatter is not “antiwhite,” as stated by the ‘Illini White Student Union’, but rather, as Alicia Garza puts it, is “an affirmation of the humanity of Black people and an homage to our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.” Even here on campus at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign there exists a variety of individuals and groups fighting for Black lives - we salute and applaud all of these commitments and expressions of resistance to the varied forms of racial violence we face. Together, we will win. At UIUC we say Black lives matter because anti-Black racism is alive and well at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. We know this specific racism intimately as just this past school year, one of our members was targeted by non-Black faculty and University administrators for our Black Lives Matter activism against discrimination of Black women faculty at the University.

standingwithheR stands in solidarity with the Black students across the country who have released demands (<http://www.thedemands.org/>) in the ongoing struggle against anti-Black racism on our campuses. Black student demands, from Mizzou to Yale, to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, are linked. For example, while our colleagues and comrades at Mizzou are demanding University of Missouri increase Black faculty to 10% to match Black student demographics on their campus, SWH has been and continues to call for UIUC administrators to end and rectify the systematic disappearance and disposal of Black women on campus. Mizzou students are demanding an *increase* in Black faculty, while that is certainly needed at UIUC also, administrators at UIUC must abolish the *forceful and violent removal* of Black women faculty who are competent, skilled, and needed.

As Black students who, too, are members of the UIUC community, we deserve thoughtful answers and critical actions from University administrators. Those who lead our Office of Diversity Equity and Access, for example, should not be mute and stand idly by as they have on the sorts of acts of terror and intimidation that we Black students, faculty, and staff are facing at UIUC. Both silence and inaction are sanction. To meet that need, we demand that Interim Chancellor Wilson, Interim Vice Chancellor Feser, and Vice Chancellor Romano, along with Chancellor/Associate Provost Menah Pratt-Clarke, who oversees the Office of Diversity Equity and Access, partner with us to address the University’s challenges on Black student safety, among other big issues of racial discrimination on campus. Such efforts would be an important start towards addressing Black student and faculty skepticism about how serious University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign administration is “committed to working harder to build a culture of respect and community” as you remarked in your mass email sent to the campus on November 19, 2015 in response to the recent social media postings by the ‘Illini White Student Union’.

The pages that follow this letter list the demands of standing with heR. It is important to note that standing with heR’s demands do not reflect the demands of all of the Black students, faculty, and staff on campus. However, all of the members of standing with heR have an invested interest in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. We have committed

financial resources, intellectual capital and property, and our time and energy to help make the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign “a world leader in research, teaching, and public engagement.” Thus, it is our right to make our demands. Further, when and wherever Black people are being oppressed, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win.” We do this out of our love and respect for each other. In the end, “we have nothing to lose but our chains.” Ultimately, this document reflects the structural changes and practical actions and processes that should be made to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. We expect a response to these demands by no later than January 19, 2016.

If we do not receive a response to these demands by January 19th, we will take actions that are suitable to the circumstances. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please direct them to reinstatetheruiuc@gmail.com. Knowing our experiences and those of Black women across academia, we submit these demands today so that the next Black student will not know our struggle.

In the struggle for all Black lives,

standing with heR

LIST OF DEMANDS FROM SWH TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

1. We demand that University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign administrators un-invite and hold accountable those who create an anti-Black hostile learning and work environment for Black students and others. Tangible, measurable consequences for people who threaten racial violence and compromise the feelings of community and safety for their fellow students, faculty, and staff need to be a priority of this administration. The 'Illini White Student Union' Facebook page, relentlessly erected despite attempts to dismantle it via social media outlets, presents a clear and present danger to Black students who are lawfully demonstrating and organizing, especially the Black woman student whose Facebook page was violently profiled,. The veritable hit list the authors have compiled has positioned this as not an issue of freedom of speech, but an issue of terrorism, exceeding narrow definitions of harassment, threat, disorderly or obscene conduct as prescribed by the law.

2. We demand that the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign recruit, retain, and economically support Black Women faculty who do research related to critical policy and race, gender, sexuality, and cultural studies as Black women play a critical role in the dismantling of systems of privilege and oppression and supporting Black students through degree earning processes.
 - a. Thus, we demand that University administrators end and rectify the discrimination against and dismissal of Black women faculty on campus, particularly in the College of Education. The University can begin to rectify these violations exacted on Black women by reinstating Dr. Rema Reynolds to her position within the College of Education and fully restoring all economic, emotional, mental, and physical losses that are a direct result of the University's actions against her. Dr. Reynolds was unjustly and arbitrarily terminated from her tenure-faculty position last semester, resulting in a breach of contract, wrongful dismissal, race discrimination, and violation of her due process rights. We demand University administrators secure an outside party to conduct a full investigation into her case and the patterns and practices of the College of Education, based on objective review of evidence, University policy, and state and federal law, which is to be shared with Dr. Reynolds and her legal counsel.
 - b. We demand that University administrators secure an audit from an outside party to investigate salary, compensation, workload, tenure and promotion processes,

and leadership opportunities for women of color in comparison to men in every department across the University by the end of March 2016.

- c. We demand intentional financial resources for Black women faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and civil service workers (e.g. equitable pay, professional growth opportunities, fair course load assignments, comparable numbers of advisees, etc.). Specifically, in both the departments of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership and Gender and Women's Studies we demand that the University create two fully-funded tenure track full-time assistant/associate professor lines for Black women faculty. We are to participate in creating the job call for these positions but it must be noted here that the ideal candidates must have demonstrated focus and specialization that directly engages intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality and cultural difference. Strong candidates will have excellent records of research and/or teaching in relation to Black women.
 - d. Provide mental and spiritual health services and, where appropriate, financial amends for the Black women (faculty, students, and civil service workers) traumatized by discriminatory actions of the University. These discriminatory actions are to be reported by affected individuals and collectives and viewed as valid by the University. The audit will assist in identifying individuals and whole groups who need these remedies.
3. We demand that the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign increase the funding and resources for programming across campus and within the community that raises critical racial consciousness and promotes, not just in word only, a safe and inclusive campus culture for all students, including and especially those students that are Black. The University must begin by providing funding and resources for Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT), which has demonstrated programming and curriculum that is not just specific to the needs of Black students but also attends to increasing awareness campus-wide at the intersections of race, gender, age, and sexuality, especially in relation to Black girls and women.

We demand that the Provost's office provide Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown, the creator of SOLHOT, a research budget to support her active research agenda on Black girls and women, including funding for two research assistants. These student positions should be tuition reimbursable and include a stipend at or above a living wage. There is theft of Black women's labor and the making of profit off of Black bodies and labor in the way the

University peddles the work of SOLHOT, without any financial support to those who do the work.

4. We demand that the University create a student committee with at least two Black student representatives to participate in search and selection of future University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Provost, Chancellor, Director of the Office of Diversity Equity and Access, and a Director for the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center, which is to include all current searches and selections. Alongside this student committee we demand standing with heR have a tangible voice in who fulfills these administrative positions. We will endorse a people's candidate for these positions. Persons selected for these administrative positions must show forth not only verbal commitments to racial justice but must also provide evidence of institutional transformation in their previous life's work. In the absence of such available facts to confirm the candidate's commitment to eradicating institutional and racial violence on campus and in the world, they cannot hold either of these offices at the University. We demand to participate in the crafting of the job call.
5. We demand that University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign administrators meet the collective demands of Black students to be presented in the Spring of 2016 to make better the condition of Black student life on campus.