

**From:** Black Employee Resource Group <blackerg@ohsu.edu>

**Sent:** Monday, August 31, 2020 2:50 PM

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**Subject:** Call To Action

Good afternoon all,

Oregon has a long history of anti-Black racism. From the Black exclusion laws to redlining [1] while White settlers were given Native American land[2] even in the case where Black people were present before and during the Lewis and Clarke expedition[3]. These practices carry on to this day, and OHSU is no exception. Black people represent 6% of Portland Oregon population[4] but only 3% at OHSU[5], with a minority of leadership positions (e.g. 36 out of 6,820 faculty). This has been a trend over 10 years[6].

Long before the killing of George Floyd in 2020 that sparked national protests, the Black Employee Resource Group (BERG) have highlighted racial injustice, and presented possible solutions to the OHSU leadership to no avail.

BERG and OHSU leadership have met countless times where BERG has clearly laid out its concerns and proposals to push OHSU's journey to become an anti-racist institution. It was disappointing but not surprising to see that BERG was never consulted on the prioritization or renegotiation of these proposals even though the BERG was stated as a partner on OHSU newsletters. OHSU leadership appears to have settled on initiatives that are minimalistic in nature. These initiatives lack the substantial impact required to truly get OHSU on the Anti-racism journey. In some cases these initiatives are contrary to BERG's proposals.

It is offensive to BERG that OHSU not only neglected the advice and proposals of BERG's leadership, but decided to collect, prioritize and publish feedback and input from OHSU members as a whole which is overwhelmingly white. This in itself is racism because Black employees only constitute 3% of the OHSU population, and this survey clearly does not represent the voice of Black employees. Once again white individuals are deciding what they feel should be suitable courses of action for black employees when OHSU has been repeatedly advised by Black leaders. As much as other input is welcomed as a potential viable solution, BERG's proposals should be prioritized above other proposals. Black people are the ones inflicted with the negative impact of racism on a daily basis, and their ideas and suggestions should supersede all other change initiatives that OHSU plans to embark on.

In a recent BERG meeting, Black employees at OHSU expressed concern that they didn't matter to leadership. We expressed that the recent LYNCHINGS have deep and profound effects on us and lamented OHSU's lack of serious acknowledgement and commitment to do anything meaningful to combat their own gross racist behavior. A very small number of managers have expressed empathy and are offering days off for their employees, while the overall theme at OHSU is to continue working under excruciating conditions. The apathy as a whole from OHSU leadership is apparent. The newsletters are generic and non-committal to real change, and only serve to pacify grieving individuals who contribute to this university. The BERG members in large part do not trust HR, and has no reason to. This was a hot topic in our last meeting. Multiple examples were given where RACIST behavior was reported to HR only for HR to gaslight and send employees back to their respective departments with no resolution.

OHSU has dealt with 4 noose incidents and not one substantial action item has taken place. That realization paints OHSU as an enabler of racism despite what the leaders say. To make matters worse OHSU never prosecuted or terminated the employment of these perpetrators. Where other organizations pressed hate

crime charges against individuals that did this, OHSU did nothing of note.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/09/04/noose-was-found-hanging-university-illinois-elevator-student-has-been-arrested/> The article also states that another employee was terminated for flinging a noose in the direction of Black employees. If this is what anti-racism looks like, then one must deduce that OHSU is racist for their lack of tangible action.

For OHSU to say that there are no plans to create specific new positions for Black employees to lead anti-racism work[7], but expects BERG to exhaust its time and energy volunteering in this work, is RACISM. It is the utmost disrespect to drain us of our precious time, energy, and emotions only to do NOTHING we nor antiracist specialist such as Dr. Camara Jones whom OHSU invited to speak about being an antiracist organization recommend. OHSU consistently ask its Black employees who are traumatized to re-traumatize themselves in numerous meetings without offering opportunity to heal. This is evident by the lack of interest in creating real change or offering reparations.

We've highlighted the gaps, asked questions about changes, participated in discussions and despite the Black Lives Matter national protests that emphasized our previous points, the BERGs name was used as the Black face of OHSU while the institution did nothing. All of BERG is of one mind when we say we are tired of being disrespected, and being used to push a false narrative of change in order to maintain white supremacy which has permeated within OHSU for decades

While other similar institutions are making significant changes in the way they operate, OHSU despite having FOUR noose incidents at its institution, is dragging its feet and ignoring its most knowledgeable asset as it relates to anti-racism: BERG.

Below are a list of requests BERG has put forth that have been wholly ignored or denied.

We demand a response to this letter explaining plans and timelines to move these proposals into ACTION.

B.E.R.G Leadership Requests and Responses:

Request 1: Declare that OHSU has a ZERO tolerance policy towards racism that includes accountability, utilizing current, and new policies to enforce said zero tolerance policy (Asked 9-12 months ago)

Response 1: N/A

Request 2: Put up signs across campus that Racism in any form will not be tolerated at OHSU and its affiliates. (Asked 6-12 months ago)

Response 2: N/A

Request 3: Put Black individuals with the credentials and background in positions of leadership to make decisions and lead the charge against racist behavior. Dr. Rosemarie Hemmings has been nominated several times. (Asked 9-12 months ago)

Response 3: OHSU: There are no plans to create specific, new positions for Black employees. This, despite OHSU floundering, and several leaders having admitted to not knowing where to even start.

Request 4: Examine the data and start hiring, and promoting with emphasis on increasing the black representation in positions of leadership as well as front level, middle tier and upper management. (Asked 9-12 months ago)

Response 4: Hire consultant to say the same thing and ultimately do nothing.

Request 5: Establish a department where Black employees and other under represented employees can go to report racist and bias behavior from employees and management and get actual RESOLUTIONS.

Response: OHSU appoints HR who has been the biggest obstacle black employees have faced when it comes to reporting racial discrimination, bias, and bad treatment to lead the anti-racist movement.

## Sources:

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-white-history-racist-foundations-black-exclusion-laws/>  
[1] [https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon\\_donation\\_land\\_act/#.X0g0oNNKhTY](https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act/#.X0g0oNNKhTY)  
[1] African Americans Plant Deep Roots in Oregon  
Page 11, <https://multco.us/file/15671/download>  
[1] Data from the US Census as of July 1st 2019,  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/portlandcityoregon/PST045219>  
[1] OHSU factbook 2019 page 43: exemplary 3% (522 out of 17,381) total employees with 1% faculty (36 out of 6,820) <https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/Fact%20Book%202019%20for%20web.pdf>  
[1] Data from 2009 to 2019, <https://www.ohsu.edu/library/ohsu-fact-book>  
[1] <https://o2.ohsu.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/upload/Becoming-an-anti-racist-organization-Q-A.pdf> (page 2, last paragraph)  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/09/04/noose-was-found-hanging-university-illinois-elevator-student-has-been-arrested/>

## Initiatives:

### Attachment #1 - Morale and Diversity

#### *Morale and Diversity (MAD)*

1. Coordinate and attend recruitment functions such as job fairs... (An OHSU representative from a "diverse" background would encourage diversity participation at recruiting events.)
2. Review department data and offer recommendations on improving diverse hiring, promotion, pay equity, and retention practices...
3. Conduct quarterly audits of healthcare diversity candidates and new hires...
4. Random meetings with departments to uplift and encourage employees including managers...
5. Support ERG's ...
6. Coordinate contests for morale and diversity improvement... (Contests like name the top 5 Black/Asian/Hispanic inventions that changed the way we live today)
7. Quarterly meetings with Directors and managers of departments to discuss best practices regarding race relations...
8. Work with HR to resolve Diversity Complaints ...
9. Implement policy that factor employee satisfaction and diversity into leadership bonuses...
10. Coordinate sporting events where management faces off against the employees in a game of Volleyball, Flag Football, Softball, Basketball etc. This gives managers a chance to see their direct reports outside of a tense work environment, and allows for employees to engage with management in a fun competitive environment. Sports has been shown to bring people of all backgrounds together for a common (positive) goal.

**Attachment #2** - 14 points of action for OHSU to increase engagement, support, recruiting, retaining, equitable training and promotional opportunities for Black employees and to strengthen OHSU's standing as a better than good corporate citizen in the Black community.

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**From:** Black Employee Resource Group <blackerg@ohsu.edu>

**Date:** Friday, September 4, 2020 at 2:41 PM

**To:** Danny Jacobs <jacobsda@ohsu.edu>, Gregory Moawad <moawad@ohsu.edu>, Derick Du Vivier <derick@ohsu.edu>, John Hunter <hunterj@ohsu.edu>, Connie Seeley <seeleyc@ohsu.edu>, Sharon Anderson <anderssh@ohsu.edu>

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**Subject:** BERG Response

OHSU leadership and board of directors received an email from BERG on 8/31/2020 detailing significant concerns regarding OHSU's long history of racist practices towards its Black employees. Despite this, OHSU did not respond or acknowledge the receipt of these concerns. Four days later on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, OHSU responded to a report in the LUND, but not to the Black Employees Resource group. OHSU responded to the media within hours of a piece that was published in the LUND on 9/03/2020 but has yet to respond to BERG's concerns which was sent to OHSU on 8/31/2020. This act shows a clear disregard for their Black employees by OHSU leadership and board of directors. It is a startling confirmation that OHSU cares more about their public image than the mental, physical, and spiritual health of their Black employees.

There have been three nooses since now Senior VP Dr. Du Vivier stepped into the role of VP of CDI whereby OHSU's response was harmful to Black employees. How many Black employees and students have joined OHSU since Dr. Du Vivier assumed the VP of CDI position, versus the same period a year prior? What measurable changes has occurred since Dr. Du Vivier assumed the VP role ending of 2019 to warrant a promotion to Senior VP?

In the response to the media and not its own employees OHSU listed a long list of programs that have little to no substance and were put together in a rush to project an image that they are an inclusive university.

OHSU leadership in meetings as recently as this week, have frequently admitted that the organization routinely practiced discrimination and racism in the past. Recent reports of employees experiencing racist behavior that was unresolved by HR disagrees with the notion that this happened in the past.

**The OHSU BERG has real questions that need real answers to their employees. It cannot be overstated that this organization responded to a media outlet, and not their employees.**

1. What specifically is being done for Black employees, students, patients, visitors, contractors, and vendors to offset the damage caused by decades of systemic racism at OHSU?
2. What tangible steps have been taken to ensure black students, faculty, staff, patients, visitors, contractors, and vendors feel safe in the aftermath of 4 noose incidents? (Not what OHSU plans to do)
3. What tangible steps have been taken over the past two years to mitigate another noose incident from happening? Considering OHSU leadership has not implemented any changes, there's no reason to think there will not be more nooses, micro-aggressions and intimidation. Based on the numerous reports of harassment and discrimination, eloquent statements and unconscious bias training are not working.
4. Who is leading the anti-racist initiatives mentioned and what are their qualifications as it relates to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism? Do those leading or being considered to lead an anti-racist transformation efforts including policy and program creation and implementation possess ...real world...  
Real world direct experience addressing Black workers of all professions issues in a culture where they have not historically been treated fairly? Does their experience include direct social justice

work and programs specifically for Black people? Was it successful? Can they quantify their success in an environment resistant to change?

5. What is OHSU doing with recent and ongoing reports of racism that are not being addressed by HR?

6. What is OHSU doing about unresolved HR related issues (including the noose incidents) and the distrust from Black employees??

**7. Why did it take OHSU over 2 years and 4 nooses to determine that there was a need to change the language in their policy regarding symbols? Who is being held accountable for this harmful error?**

8. Why has no one seen this updated HR policy when it has been months since Dr. Jacobs mentioned that it would be changing?

9. Why was the decision made to move AAEO under HR instead of the president considering that HR has been derelict in their job as it relates to recruitment and retention of Black employees, derelict in their job as it relates to addressing complaints regarding harassment and discrimination on all levels and a hindrance to AAEO being able to be effective in enforcing federal law (HR aligns with managers rather than enforce or support AAEO's recommendations during investigations)?

**10. Where is the apology and the pledge of substantial redress for the pain and suffering that Black OHSU staff, students, faculty, patients, visitors, contractors, and vendors have had to face in the aftermath of these noose incidents, systemic racism and denial of advancements and opportunities?**

11. Where is the additional new money going, and how much of it is going to leadership salaries/bonus?

CDI budget – What portion of this budget was used to increase the diversity of faculty, students and staff? Why has the proportion of Black employees remained stagnant for over 10 years and what specific steps have been taken to identify contributing factors and address same?

12. Unconscious bias training – What metrics does OHSU have that shows that there has been behavior change as a result of the Unconscious Bias Training? Scholars have pointed out the Unconscious Bias Training does not work ([Fiarman 2016](#); [Noon, 2017](#)) but antiracism practices do ([Jones, 2018](#)).

**13. OHSU states it dedicates \$14M to diversity, then why are the ERG's including the BERG given such a minuscule budget (approx. \$1,000) to plan events, celebrate cultural accomplishments and traditions? If there is really \$14M allocated to diversity, and the ERG's see almost none of it, if any, and the diversity situation at OHSU is nearly identical to when OHSU practiced racism and discrimination. Once again..... Where is that money going?**

14. Real world direct experience addressing Black workers of all professions issues in a culture where they have not historically been treated fairly? Does their experience include direct social justice work and programs specifically for Black people? Was it successful? Can they quantify their success in an environment resistant to change?

**15. Why is it OHSU, the #1 hospital that it calls itself, so far behind on HR best practices as it relates to Black employees? Why are these not a priority beyond statements, new committees and repackaging the same trainings?**

16. Why is the research mission not including Black subjects, reaching out on EVERY trial and research project to the Black community? Why are they not already entrenched? Is OHSU giving back the money they were awarded to a group that WILL do this work in COVID-19 and include the groups most highly impacted? If not, OHSU is taking money from those communities.

**17. And last but not least.... WHEN DID OHSU STOP PRACTICING DISCRIMINATION? The Black employees would love to know.**

Over the past year BERG has been asked directly to come and speak to various departments, teams, and meetings at OHSU. This in itself shows that OHSU is not doing enough. If our employees were getting what they needed to be anti-racist and feel like they could contribute to the cause in an appropriate manner, they wouldn't need BERG coming to their meetings etc.