

CW: police brutality, anti-Blackness, death

Statement of Solidarity

To the Stanford community,

As Students for Environmental and Racial Justice (SERJ) and Students for a Sustainable Stanford (SSS), we affirm our solidarity with Black communities as we grieve and mourn the recent deaths of Nina Pop, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and David McAtee. They are only some of the most recent and visible people who have lost their lives by vigilantes and by institutions specifically designed and created to wage violence against Black people, namely police and prisons, by systems of racism and white supremacy that predate modern institutions. We understand solidarity as an action; thus, we will continue to do our best to support and show up for Black communities how they call on us to, and are willing to be held accountable in doing so.

We would particularly like to acknowledge and honor the Black folx who hold intersecting marginalized identities, among them poor, disabled, trans, queer, and femme Black people. We affirm that we deeply value their knowledge, as the people most impacted by the realities of racism, white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism. Thus, we are committed to the vision of transformative justice laid out by the [Movement for Black Lives](#) (M4BL), and to continuing to listen to and follow the leadership of Black communities.

In our spaces, we are actively working to educate ourselves, critically question our beliefs, and confront anti-Blackness, and to center environmental and racial justice in our work. We recognize that environmental justice has roots in Black resistance, such as Black protestors in Warren County utilizing their experience in non-violent action from the Civil Rights Movement, and the leadership of Robert Bullard and the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice in writing foundational reports on toxic wastes and race. We believe any visions for a sustainable future must necessarily entail environmental and racial justice; given how central Black Feminist thought has been in developing our collective understandings of justice and liberation, we would like to acknowledge them and their contributions, among them Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and Toni Morrison, just to name a few. We are incredibly grateful for both the historical and present knowledge and leadership that Black communities bring to the environmental justice movement and understand that it is inseparable from Black liberation, which is why we must speak up now.

We support the calls to defund police, and to instead reinvest that money into the “[education, health, and safety of Black people](#).” More than that, we recognize that police and prisons were established with the specific purpose of oppressing Black people, and we join national calls to abolish both and to establish community safety alternatives.

Demands

We have appreciated reading statements of solidarity put out by students, staff, faculty, and admin, along with the resources and calls to action included. We also recognize that we are part of an institution that helps perpetuate anti-Blackness. Thus, we call on the Stanford community— specifically students, Stanford admin, and Stanford Earth— to do our parts in addressing Stanford's own institutional racism, particularly in light of [#ShutDownAcademia](#) and [#ShutDownSTEM](#). We must go beyond our words of support, and create detailed plans of action about how we will work to eradicate anti-Blackness.

Of Stanford administration, we echo campus Black Cultural Organizations in [urging you](#) to follow the [lead](#) of the University of Minnesota and cut ties with local police and sheriff departments, as well as to reconsider the SU Prison Divest movement [demands](#).

We also support Fossil Free Stanford's [demands](#) to divest from fossil fuels. The fossil fuel industry continues to wage violence against Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) globally, extracting resources and labor from poor BIPOC while siting toxic and polluting facilities in Black communities and standing by while vulnerable people around the world experience the worst impacts of climate change. This industry commodifies people and the land in order to exploit BIPOC, taking away means to self-determine and creating dependency structures contingent on its existence.

Of Stanford Earth, we have been incredibly concerned about the severe lack of diversity and systematic devaluing of environmental justice (EJ) in the School of Earth, Energy, and Environmental Sciences (SE3) curricula. Across all the major and graduate degree programs in SE3, there are zero requirements for EJ. When taken alongside the lack of stable or adequate funding for the only two courses in Stanford Earth focused on EJ, PWR 194EP: "Intro to Environmental Justice" and CSRE 125E: "Shades of Green", it becomes clear how little SE3 cares about EJ.

This is despite students, staff, and faculty repeatedly asking for EJ to be integrated into SE3. Both of the EJ courses mentioned are the [result](#) of student action and advocacy; Shades of Green was started and taught by grad students, and a student-initiated survey on EJ interest and needs helped make Intro to EJ possible. Meanwhile, students have submitted course reviews and participated in town halls about how courses like Earthsys 112 and Sust 210 are problematic and de-center EJ, yet Stanford Earth willfully continues not to listen.

Especially with the [announcement](#) of a new school of sustainability that did not mention EJ at all, and mentioned equity exactly once in reference to the IDEAL initiative in the [executive summary](#), we are highly worried that this school will reproduce and deepen present structural injustices. We acknowledge and appreciate the statements that SE3 and Earth Systems have put forth, and we would like to see commitment to concrete actions to match. Stanford is already failing to meet students' educational needs by de-centering EJ; without making comprehensive structural changes, this institution will continue to fail us.

First, we would like to reiterate the demands we (SERJ) put forth [last spring](#), which have been modified as needed:

1. Institutionalize EJ through cluster hire of EJ faculty. These faculty should be Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) with lived knowledge of EJ.
2. Recognize Stanford's ongoing history of injustices and oppression of the Ohlone peoples and California Native peoples more generally, and open the conversation about making reparations to them. This entails talking to them about what healing and reparative justice might look like, and making financial reparations while we continue to occupy their stolen ancestral lands.
3. Center Environmental and Racial Justice (ERJ) by cultivating and practicing justice and reparations frameworks in the long-ranging planning implementation, university administrative direction, etc. SERJ advocates for the establishment of a transparent, reciprocal, and BIPOC student-focused ERJ university policy advisory committee.

Furthermore, given changes that have been happened since then, we have additional demands:

1. Create an EJ requirement for every SE3 degree program. Every SE3 student should meaningfully engage with the theory and practice of ERJ through coursework before they graduate. This necessitates the creation of additional EJ core courses.
2. Establishment of an EJ minor. This will require the creation of EJ breadth and depth courses.

3. Institutionalize a center for EJ on campus. We support the Environmental Justice Working Group's (EJWG) proposal for the Environmental Justice Clinic and Learning Community.
4. Representation of students, teaching staff from the EJ courses, and BIPOC community members in decision-making and planning regarding the new school of sustainability.
5. Form a committee from the aforementioned groups (see above demand) alongside leadership of the new sustainability school, and draft a specific plan for incorporating ERJ as a cross-cutting theme, and provide resources to support and sustain ERJ research and community engagement.

We would like to emphasize that representation of marginalized groups and centering ERJ will be critical in allowing Stanford to be proactive about justice, rather than only reacting and making changes in times of crisis, after people have already been harmed.

Of our fellow students and student organizations, we ask you to join us in making solidarity an action, and to hold Stanford to its word to truly value and care for Black students. This means listening to Black students and student orgs, especially when they call us to [action](#), but also not putting the labor solely upon them to advocate for their needs. Thus, we support the [demands](#) put forth by Stanford's Black Cultural Organizations, and we encourage all of you to do as well.

As mentioned above, climate injustice primarily harms poor BIPOC communities globally, we also encourage you to read [Fossil Free Stanford's op-ed](#) and send an [email](#) to the Board of Trustees, telling them to divest from fossil fuels.

In solidarity,
Students for Environmental and Racial Justice (SERJ)
Students for a Sustainable Stanford (SSS)