Education is fundamentally important in the work of anti-racism. As engineers, scientists and academics, we understand that we can't work to solve a problem if we don't understand the problem and its contexts. White people and non-Black people of color will never know the experiences and feelings of being Black in America and all the racism and trauma that is inflicted because of that, but that doesn’t mean that we can’t work to understand it. This education should also serve to spark a fire, so that the work of racial justice is something we all continue doing long after the news cycle changes.

Action is the most important thing that any of us can do. Choosing inaction is choosing to perpetuate the structures of racism that left George Floyd gasping for air on the street and pleading "I can't breathe." Because we each occupy a myriad of spaces and roles within the University and the world more broadly, there will be a myriad of ways we can make changes. Figure out how you want to make change and then start doing the work.

Healing from the intense trauma of anti-Black racism and killings is something that comes from and is led by Black individuals and the Black community. Non-Black people can obviously still help with this, but should do so with the understanding that they should be in support roles, not trying themselves to lead Black people's healing. Also, understand that like any social category, Black people are not a monolith and that the ways to support one Black individual's healing can and will be different from another's. You'll need to be able to adjust and respond differently to different folks' different needs.

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**EDUCATION**

- What ways are you planning on educating yourself on the topics of racism, anti-Blackness, oppression, etc.? What *specific* books, interviews/TEDtalks, podcasts, etc. will you be looking at, and what *timeline* will you be doing this under?

- What vocabulary terms have you recently been hearing that you were unfamiliar with or that you hear being used in contexts you’re unsure about? (E.g. “anti-racist”, “intersectionality”, “microaggression”, “privilege”, “White fragility”, “trauma”, “oppression”, “marginalization”, etc.) How do you plan on becoming more familiar with these terms, recognizing them in everyday life/situations, and becoming more *comfortable using these terms* in your language and vocabulary?
If you are at a point where you are relatively comfortable talking about racism, racial privilege, oppression, marginalization, etc., how will you help educate others? For example, how are you going to discuss these topics with colleagues, friends, family, and others who feel comfortable around you but uncomfortable with these subjects?

Looking specifically at anti-Black racism in academia, how do you plan to learn about the negative experiences and microaggressions that Black academics face on a regular-basis? #BlackInTheIvory is a start, but how will you go beyond that?

**ACTION**

Related to the previous question above, after understanding what negative experiences and microaggressions Black academics face, how are you going to learn how to intervene when you hear others or yourself committing these microaggressions? Your goal should be knowing how to and feeling comfortable with identifying, intervening, and proactively preventing these from occurring within your sphere of influence within the University.

What roles do you occupy within the University structure (e.g. student, TA, researcher, staff, faculty, PI, committee member, department chair, program director, etc.) and how are the responsibilities of your role(s) connected to Black disparities in higher education (e.g. recruitment, admissions, retention, advancement, graduation rates, promotion rates, etc.) Understanding your role in the University and what areas you can affect change in, how will you start making changes, and how will your efforts have concrete, measurable goals, accountability, and timelines incorporated into them?

After determining where/how you can make changes within your own sphere of influence within the University, how will you get others, particularly those higher up in the system hierarchy, to develop their own plans for change, make those plans public, and hold them accountable in their work?

Many Black students, faculty and staff have stories of negative experiences within STEM academia (and this fully includes our own institution and departments), but may not feel comfortable sharing their stories due to fear of retaliation, “making waves”, or upsetting the established racial hierarchy in ways that can end up harming their studies/careers. How will you work to establish mechanisms and relationships for Black colleagues and peers to report bad behavior, ensure that reported bad behavior is not ignored, second-guessed, or explained away, and guarantee that individuals using these mechanisms (whether anonymous or not) are not retaliated against or negatively impacted by reporting?
• Mistakes and failures are inevitable as humans. **When you make mistakes**, either big or small, in the future while doing this work of advancing racial justice, how will you **apologize** to any people you’ve upset or hurt, how will you ensure you **learn from your mistakes**, and how will you make sure the fear of making mistakes doesn’t keep you from engaging with the work of racial justice?

• How will you plan to **ensure that the work of racial justice is something you actively continue pursuing in the future** months and years to come, even when the national spotlight is on other issues? (The more concrete the ideas for staying committed, the better.)

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### HEALING

• Are you comfortable enough with the language and vocabulary of racial justice and oppression to have conversations during times of turmoil and racial pain and be relatively **confident you won’t cause any additional hurt with any careless words or messages**? Do you understand whether/when/how to reach out to Black colleagues and friends during times of racial pain and when to give folks space? (E.g. **"I Don’t Need ‘Love’ Texts From My White Friends"** by Chad Sanders in the New York Times.) If you are not sure whether/how you should reach out during times like these, **how can you develop ways to figure that out so that you’re prepared for the future?**

• When Black colleagues and students need to take time and space away to prioritize their needs and heal, do you have plans for how you can **accommodate and support these needs for time and space for healing**?

• Do you have a **list of resources that you can provide** to or talk about with Black students and colleagues so that they can work to heal from the mental and physical toll that anti-Black racism takes?

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**Other Resources:**

• [#ShutDownAcademia #ShutDownSTEM](#) website
• [How to Be Anti-Racist](#) resources
• [Twitter thread](#) from #BlackInTheIvory
• "**I Don’t Need ‘Love’ Texts From My White Friends**" by Chad Sanders, New York Times
• "**White Academia: Do Better**", by Jasmine Roberts, Medium