Oberlin College

To:

Board of Trustees: Chair* Clyde McGregor, Patricia Shanks, Charles Birenbaum, T. Christopher Canavan, Amy Chen, Thomas F. Cooper, Joe Condon, Meg Coward, Motoko Deane, Gifty Dominah, Lillie Edwards, Ed Helms, Cynthia Hogan, Alan W. Houseman, Charlene Drew Jarvis, Michael Kamarck, Eric Katzman, David Krischer, Will Lewis, Nicholas Loh, Chesley Maddox-Dorsey, Emily McClintock, Molly Hurst Raphael, Thomas Riis, David Shapira, Susan Troy, Philip Vasan, Leanne Wagner, Harlan Waksal, Elizabeth Welch, Danette Wineberg, Alan Wurtzel, and Diane Yu.

President Marvin Krislov, **Vice President and Dean of Students** Eric Estes, and all other appropriate Governing Bodies,

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Oberlin College and Conservatory is an unethical institution. From capitalizing on massive labor exploitation across campus, to the Conservatory of Music treating Black and other students of color as less than through its everyday running, Oberlin College unapologetically acts as unethical institution, antithetical to its historical vision. In the 1830s, this school claimed a legacy of supporting its Black students. However, that legacy has amounted to nothing more than a public relations campaign initiated to benefit the image of the institution and not the Africana people it was set out for. Along the same lines stated by UNC Chapel Hill students in their 2015 document "A Collective Response to Anti-Blackness," you include Black and other students of color in the institution and mark them with the words "equity, inclusion and diversity," when in fact this institution functions on the premises of imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, and a cissexist heteropatriarchy. Oberlin College and Conservatory uses the limited number of Black and Brown students to color in its brochures, but then erases us from student life on this campus. You profit off of our accomplishments and invisible labor, yet You expect us to produce personal solutions to institutional incompetencies. We as a College-defined "high risk," "low income," "disadvantaged" community should not have to carry the burden of deconstructing the white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist system that we took no part in creating, yet is so deeply embedded in the soil upon which this institution was built.

In admissions material, Oberlin proudly broadcasts the statement "Think one person can change the world? So do we." With this spurious rhetoric in mind, the time for direct and immediate action reforming higher education is long overdue. We will not be silenced; we will not be attending any more forums, speak outs, teach ins, convocations, working groups, committees, etc. in lieu of our liberation.

Our larger goals are to see:

1. An increase in Black and students of color represented in the institution from the Americas, including the Caribbean and Africa
2. An increase in Black administrators and faculty across departments and governing bodies
3. The divestment from all prisons and Israel
4. Exclusive Black safe spaces on campus
5. The active elimination of institutional complacency that allows violence against Black students to thrive and persist
6. The eradication of hegemony in the curriculum across the College and Conservatory
7. The end of Oberlin College functioning as a gentrifying institution
8. An end to the erasure of Black contributions on this campus

Many of these demands have been issued before and subsequently ignored by administration, faculty and students. This was never acceptable, and will no longer be tolerated.

As you will see these are not polite requests, but concrete and unmalleable demands. Failure to meet them will result in a full and forceful response from the community you fail to support. Our demands are as follows:

ADMISSIONS, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

1. We DEMAND a 4% annual increase in Black student enrollment from EACH of the Americas, the Caribbean and continent of Africa starting in 2016 to accumulate to a 40% increase by 2022. This increase must occur in the College. Additionally, this deadline should NOT be taken as a reversal point back to the previous policy, and the standards of increased enrollment should be held as a minimum.

2. We DEMAND a concerted effort to increase the percentage of Black students and specifically Black female identifying instrumentalists in the Jazz department. We would like to reiterate the demand for a 4% annual increase in the enrollment of Black students in the Jazz Department starting in 2016 to accumulate to 40% increase by the year 2022.

3. We DEMAND more Black administrators in the following offices:
    a. Office of Financial Aid
    b. Office of Student Health
    c. Office of Student Accounts
    d. Office of the President
    e. Office of Disabilities
    f. Office of the Dean
    g. Office of Residential Education

4. We DEMAND that all Black prospective students be interviewed by admissions officers that are trained in race consciousness practices for undergraduate admissions.

5. We DEMAND that all Black international students who are unable to return back to their home countries be provided with FREE housing during post-semester breaks such as but not limited to winter breaks.

6. We DEMAND a more inclusive audition process in the Conservatory that does not privilege Western European theoretical knowledge over playing ability. We DEMAND the inclusion of teachers and educators with auditory and relative business skills pertaining to contemporary Black musical styles.

7. We DEMAND proper and transparent communication from the various authorities regarding admissions and retention, beyond the bombardment of Oberlin College emails we receive daily.

8. We DEMAND more transparency in the faculty recruitment process for the Jazz department. The selection of educators that will shape all of our future musical experiences without any legitimate effort to receive student feedback is ludicrous. A candidate should not be brought in to audition for a position while students are not on campus.

9. We DEMAND an online database that outlines the deadline, dates, and forms critical for the successful academic journey of Black students.

10. We DEMAND that Black students be able to supplement their primary academic advisor with an advisor outside of their department or major.

11. We DEMAND financial aid workshops for Black students by Black financial aid officers so that students can fully understand the contents of their financial package and how it will change throughout their time at Oberlin College and Conservatory.

12. We DEMAND funding to have an event for Black first-year students during orientation week, so that they may interact with community members that does not conflict with required events.
    a. At this event, students will meet Black faculty and staff, the RAs of Afrikan Heritage House, the Black counselors, as well as other students to acquaint them with resources geared toward their successful tenure at Oberlin College and Conservatory. This should start in 2016 during the next student orientation session.

13. We DEMAND the allocation of resources geared towards shifting the institutional climate so that Black faculty, administration and staff can thrive and not have to engage in the invisible labor that we know is an important part of their work. We will gauge the success of this demand through a semesterly survey sent to Black faculty, administrators and staff deeming the success of this initiative.
    a. We DEMAND direct oversight of this process.

14. We DEMAND institutional and financial support for a Black Bridge Program between the Oberlin school system and Oberlin College and Conservatory. This program will help increase the successful graduation of students from Oberlin High School, provide a peer support system, and shape successful leaders for the future Oberlin College.
    a. This program should start by the beginning of the next Academic year in 2016.

15. We DEMAND a change in the fundamental ways that we assess knowledge at this institution, starting with a student evaluation of the effectiveness of the grading system. We will have oversight over the results of that evaluation.
    a. If the results state that the grading system is not reflective of this institution's student body, we DEMAND an immediate change of that grading system.

16. We DEMAND a semesterly transparent report showing the progress and initiatives to make these demands a reality, to be shared with every Black leader on campus, namely the:
    a. Co-Chairs of ABUSUA, ASA, and SOCA
    b. RAs of African Heritage House
    c. Black Scientists Guild
    d. Oberlin College Black Musicians Guild
    e. Chair of the Africana Studies Department
    f. Dean of Students Office

17. We DEMAND direct involvement and transparency in the process of hiring the new Oberlin College president.

ACADEMICS AND CURRICULUM

1. We DEMAND a structural change in institutional graduation requirements:
    a. Intro to the Black Experience or a similar course must be instituted as a mandatory requirement for all students before graduation.
    b. Departmental requirements for students to take Western/Classical centered courses must be eliminated, if NOT then we demand all students MUST also take an equivalent course in the African Diaspora.
        - For example, in the Theatre Department it is a requirement to take Western Theatre History Parts I & II; students should also be required to take a course such as Black Arts Workshop and or African American Drama.
        - For example, in the Dance Department students are required to take Ballet & Contemporary I & II, therefore students should be required to take West African I & II.
        - For example, in the Conservatory majors are required to take a course in Music History whose content is heavily westernized, but we DEMAND that it be mandatory for all Conservatory students to take African-American Music History.
        - For example, in the History department Western and US History are major requirements which places the history of these regions in a higher esteem than other regions of the world. Therefore, we DEMAND that students be required to take African Civilizations up to the 1800s.
        - In U.S. History classes, Blackness is only discussed in terms of slavery and Civil Rights. This is a reductionist, single-view of the experiences and contributions of Black people to the history of the United States. We further DEMAND that the curriculum be changed in order to discuss blackness in more depth.

2. We DEMAND that Jazz Curriculum in the Conservatory be reflective of the students musical focus. Students SHOULD NOT be forced to take heavily based classical courses that have minimal relevance to their Jazz interests. Classical students are not forced to take Jazz courses, and seeing as how most Jazz students are of the Africana community, they should not be forced to take courses rooted in whiteness.

3. We DEMAND a more holistic and inclusive approach to Black music be undertaken by the Jazz Department through:

- The addition of faculty that do work not only in the "Jazz World" but are knowledgable in all facets of contemporary Black musical performance
- The addition of faculty that have an understanding of modern performance techniques that include keyboard technology, auxiliary keyboard techniques, modern bass, guitar and drum performance
- The expansion of the Oberlin Conservatory Jazz Studies Department to the Oberlin Conservatory Black American Music department, with Specific focuses such as Black North American Classical Music, Afro-Caribbean Music, Afro-Brazilian Music and other forms of African influenced music in the Western Hemisphere

4. We DEMAND that a **mandatory** professional development program be developed for faculty across departments in the College & Conservatory that will help facilitate their understanding of the ways in which racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and other forms of violent oppression inform and shape instructional methods for the disciplinary content of their courses. We further DEMAND that the content of this information be integrated in their coursework. Furthermore, this training should broaden professors' awareness of the kinds of issues students of color have to navigate when racially charged, traumatic events happen on campus and in the world and help faculty develop productive and appropriate responses to such circumstances.

5. In order to meet demand 1b*, we further DEMAND the recruiting and integration of more Black faculty into all departments but specifically in:

- **Politics**, Philosophy, **Economics**, Theater, Dance, Sociology, Neuroscience, The ENTIRE Conservatory, **Chemistry/Biochemistry**, **Biology**, History, **Classics**, **Physics**, Creative Writing, Psychology, The Athletics Department, **Art**, **Anthropology**, **Computer Science**, **Cinema Studies**, Comparative American Studies, **Geology**, **Environmental Studies**, **Math**, Religion, Rhetoric & Composition, & Gender Sexuality and Feminist Studies.

This demand should NOT be filled with Professors from the Africana Studies Department in joint appointment positions.

6. We DEMAND the creation of a department that focuses on languages of the Africana peoples to include a minimum of one language each from the African continent, Caribbean, and the Americas:

- The continent of Africa: Kiswahili, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, Mende, Xhosa, Zulu, Shona, Ndebele, Lingala etc
- The Americas: Black English, Creole, Gullah Dialect etc
- The Caribbean: Haitian Creole, Jamaican Patois, etc.

7. We DEMAND the renaming of these specific academic buildings:

- The Kohl Jazz Building to the Wendell Logan Building--a Black man who created the Jazz Department and gave his life to this institution.
- Hall Auditorium to the Avery Brooks Auditorium--a world renowned actor and alumnus of this very institution, Class of 1970.
- Lord/Saunders dorm to Saaka/Peek dorm after Professor Yakubu Saaka and Professor Emeritus Booker Peek with a specific section dedicated to Maggie Terry all of whom dedicated their lives to the academic, social, and emotional well being of the Africana people on this campus.
- The Art Building to the Edmonia Lewis Building after world renowned sculptor Edmonia lewis as an acknowledgement of the debt owed to her for the violence that she experienced at this institution. We cannot claim her work and reputation without acknowledging her trauma.

8. We DEMAND a $10,000 book fund for the Afrikana House Library. It is important for students of our community to stay educated and well versed in the issues plaguing their communities, and books are one of the many tools to do so.

FINANCIAL,HEALTH AND WELLNESS BEING OF BLACK STUDENTS

1. We DEMAND a yearly report of Black students from The Americas, Caribbean and Africa showing the recruitment breakdown, graduation rate, and number of students who have taken a leave. This report should include raw numbers that include departmental & class breakdowns. This is so that we can constantly improve and evaluate the retention of Black students through health and wellness initiatives that complement their success.

2. We DEMAND a written form that assures us of the institution's commitment to increase the number of black psychologists within the Counseling Center. Furthermore, we DEMAND that Black students be able to sit in on the interviews of these HIGHLY QUALIFIED candidates in order to ensure that these professionals cater to the needs of the Black students.
    a. We also DEMAND the hiring of Black healers/ non western health practitioners because not everyone finds comfort and healing solely from a psychologist.

3. We DEMAND a 6% annual increase in grant offers versus loan offers for Black students for the next 5 years leading to a 30% increase by 2021. This deadline should NOT be taken as a reversal point back to the previous policy and should be maintained as a minimum. Historically, Black bodies have experienced institutionally acquired debt through higher interest rates from insurance companies, mortgage companies, auto finance, healthcare, etc. Therefore piling on student loan debt goes against one of the core founding principles of Oberlin College & Conservatory, which is to promote the successful prosperity of Black people within the academic sphere and beyond.

4. We DEMAND that all grants issued by the school for financial assistance purposes be awarded as cheques prior to the time of need instead of a reimbursement. This includes and is not limited to Career Center grants, Ignition Fund, Xarts Fund etc.

5. We DEMAND an adequate increase in funding for internships and career opportunities for all Black students that is awarded appropriately. For instance, a $3500 internship fund for a low income student with a 3 month internship in New York City does not make any sustainable sense considering the high cost of living. We further DEMAND that we have direct input in the structuring of the rubric used to grant these funds.

6. We DEMAND, that Black Students should be able to access these funds irrespective of the source of their opportunity; Oberlin opportunity vs External opportunity.

7. We DEMAND that spaces throughout the Oberlin College campus be designated as a safe space for Africana identifying students. Afrikan Heritage House should not be the only space allotted for the promotion and acknowledgement of our community specific needs.
    a. We DEMAND that no less than one full room or space be given to this need in:
        i. Wilder Hall
        ii. The Science Center
        iii. Mudd Library

8. We DEMAND that Afrikan Heritage House be given significant repairs and upgrades in the following areas:
    a. We DEMAND that the AV system in Lord Lounge be maintained regularly--it is in desperate need of repairs and system upgrades.
    b. We DEMAND that the pianos in both Lord and Saunders lounge be given routine tunings, just as other pianos around campus--particularly those in white spaces.
    c. We DEMAND that a room be given to the Black Scientists Wing that includes ample and relevant equipment and supplies for the success of Black students in the sciences.

9. We DEMAND that the Edmonia Lewis Center and House be given significant repairs and upgrades in the following areas:
    a. The entire building on 76 S Professor.
    b. The entire building on 78 S Professor.

10. We DEMAND that the Edmonia Lewis Center receive the Lewis Center as a community center run solely by students and community members and not by professional staff and be used for programming of our own initiatives

11. We DEMAND an immediate review and restructure of the Office of Residential Service policies regarding access to housing and meal options. The current policies are financially inaccessible and unsustainable to Black students.

WORKERS: ACADEMIC & NON ACADEMIC

1. We DEMAND these professors be granted tenure IMMEDIATELY:
    - Adenike Sharpley, Artist in Residence Africana Studies Department
    - Bernard Matambo, Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
    - Charles Peterson, Assistant Professor in Africana Studies

2. We DEMAND these professors be placed on a tenure track:
    - Fredara Hadley, Visiting Assistant Professor in Ethnomusicology
    - Willis Okech Oyugi, Visiting Assistant Professor of History
    - Tina Botts, Visiting Assistant Professor in Philosophy
    - Afia Ofori-Mensa, Visiting Professor in Comparative American Studies
    - Rashelle Peck, Faculty in Residence Africana Studies Department
    - Shane McCrae, Assistant Professor in Creative Writing

3. We DEMAND a guaranteed tenure upon review for these professors whom are on tenure track:
    - Joy Karega, Assistant Professor of Rhetoric & Composition
    - Justin Emeka, Assistant Professor of Theater & Africana Studies
    - Darko Opoku, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies
    - Yveline Alexis, Assistant Professor in Africana Studies
    - Tameka Nunley, Assistant Professor of History
    - Leslie Kwakye, Assistant Professor of Neuroscience
    - Gunnar Kwakye, Assistant Professor of Neuroscience
    - Danielle Terrazas Williams, Assistant Professor of History

4. We DEMAND a full time Black professor for African American Music History.
    - Professor Fredara Hadley has been doing an exceptional job for the past 2 years, and would be able to make a greater impact on a greater amount of students if given more time & resources.

5. We DEMAND that a Black woman be hired as the head of the Jazz Vocal Department.
    - This search should be extensive, and should not be limited to individuals from the immediate Cleveland area, but should encompass the globe. It should also be well advertised and students of the Jazz department and the greater conservatory should be updated regularly.

6.We DEMAND that Black student leaders be provided a $8.20/hr stipend for their continuous organizing efforts around the well being of Black people on Oberlin's campus, city and beyond.

7. We DEMAND a minimum wage of $15 dollars for all employed staff members at this institution.

8. We DEMAND that the workload given to employees be reflective of their abilities. If workers are disabled, elderly, or pregnant they should not be given a workload that they cannot handle.

9. We DEMAND all employees be given healthcare & insurance through the college as part of their work benefits.

10. We DEMAND that each worker, temporary or permanent working for College Dining Hall Services be given a meal **every** work shift.

11. We DEMAND the development of a Bridge program for recently released prisoners from Grafton to enroll as undergraduate students at Oberlin College. Seeing as how we know that the Prison Industrial Complex sends disproportionate numbers of Black men to prison, this Bridge program will reflect this college's commitment to social justice initiatives for Africana peoples.

12. We DEMAND the immediate firing of:

- Marjorie Burton, Head of Safety & Security for the mishandling of Black students' safety needs.
- David Alvarez, & Sergeant David Bender for their complicity and role in the violent mishandling of Zakiya Acey.
- Gerri Johnson, Accounts Payable Supervisor for their rude behavior towards Black Students and inefficient running of the office delaying the printing and releasing of checks and funds.
- Ellen Sayles, Associate Dean of Studies due to her mishandling of students mental & emotional needs.
- Kathryn Stuart, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives due to her GRAVE mishandling of the mental & emotional needs of students of color, as well as her history with the mishandling of documents that would have allowed students of color to graduate on time.
- John Harshbarger, Director of Student Health and Counseling Services for his inability to act when students of color have urgent needs and need to change their housing arrangements due to mental health concerns.
- Allen Cadwallader, Professor of Music Theory in the Conservatory, due to the racist undertones of his course as well as the ways in which he treats

Black jazz students who take his course, which is rooted in white supremacy.

- Stephen Hartke Chair & Professor of the Department of Composition, for his blatantly disrespectful remarks about students pronouns, racist views on musical composition as well as his lack of effort in hiring Black composers here at Oberlin College

13. We DEMAND the promotion of:

- Andres Fernandez, Assistant Dean of Studies to Class Dean for his constant dedication and care for the academic success and social well being for Black students.
- Dean Kimberly Jackson Davidson to be promoted to Dean of Studies for her passion, dedication and ability to cater to the academic success and social well being of Black Students on this campus. She has gone out of her way to ensure that Black Students graduate and that they have everything that they need. She has been a consistent source of support to many Black Students on campus outside the bounds of her job and there is no doubt in our minds that she will be able to transfer the same to this position.

COMMUNITY: OBERLIN & BEYOND

1. We DEMAND that Oberlin College stop functioning as a gentrifying institution by:
    - The immediate rehiring of community members who worked at the Oberlin Inn before its renovation, accompanied with a Professional Development Day to train them on the updated work skills needed to successfully navigate their job responsibilities.
    - The immediate discontinuation of the No Trespass List, because it disproportionately and discriminatorily targets Black people from the town of Oberlin.
    - The immediate implementation of a free bussing system for Oberlin Elementary, Middle & High School students, paid for by the College.
    - The immediate divestment from Israel, who has exploited many African descendant peoples seeking refuge. Furthermore, because the oppressive and violent acts towards Palestinians mirrors the anti-Blackness currently in the United States.
    - The implementation of a program allowing willing community members to take one course per semester at Oberlin College for FREE.
    - The immediate establishment of a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program by the College that is approved by the City of Oberlin.

These are demands and not suggestions. If these demands are not taken seriously, immediate action from the Africana community will follow.