

# CORNELL UNITED RELIGIOUS WORK

## Statement on Campus Racism and International Terrorism

Undersigned by Chaplains and  
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Religious Work

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Recent protests and incidents, locally and nationally, related to campus racism are the latest iteration of a long movement demanding more inclusive, equitable learning and living environments. Prior iterations of publicly-recognized campus activism against racism occurred of in the late 1960s and late 1980s.

In 2015, spurred by a Black Lives Matter movement insistent on mitigating decades-long tensions between black and other communities of color and law enforcement, contemporary campus activism has revealed both overt and subterranean racial hostility (i.e., microaggressions). These factors militate against the success of students of color. Students have demanded action to overcome these structural barriers.

Cornell United Religious Work, an organization committed to interfaith cooperation which played a pivotal role in addressing this campus' unrest over racism in the 1960s, is supportive of students exercising their freedom of speech, belief and activity to address America's original sin of racism. Because racism is a cancer of the spirit threatening the nation's vital organs, faith communities have a distinct role to play in articulating a prognosis and proposing a cure.

Further, Muslim members of the CURW/Cornell communities have often experienced the toxic admixture of racism and Islamophobia—certainly since 9/11 and in the aftermath of 2015's horrific tragedies in Beirut, Paris, Kenya and Nigeria, ignited by forces which misrepresent Islam. Hence, we firmly affirm the divinely-granted dignity and worth of all human beings and their intersecting identities resulting from personal conviction, circumstance and/or realities of birth.

CURW supports efforts such as the 19 November Breaking Bread event at G10 Biotech and the ongoing interaction between Black Students United, President Garrett and Vice President Lombardi. We support dialogue coupled with action to address root causes of racism to improve our community. CURW offers itself as one of many campus resources during this challenging time.

On 1 December 2015 the 60th anniversary of Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to comply with the segregated public transportation system in Montgomery, AL was commemorated. Her arrest energized the nascent black freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. Ms. Parks' act, part of her long history of activism, reminds us all that change can occur. May we, in our current time, all find ways to be the change we seek, pray for, envision and/or desire.

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