

# **Performative Gestures:**

## **A Content Analysis of Public Statements about Inherent Racism in Policing and Other American Institutions, and Whether Those Statements Benefit Black Americans**



EQUITY INSTITUTE FOR RACE CONSCIOUS PEDAGOGY

## **Performative Gestures**

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# ABSTRACT

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# THIS

report examines the link between public statements and institutional history of racist policy and practice—a topic thrust into the national spotlight during the spring and summer of 2020 following the police killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. We studied 831 public statements collected by four

sectors of American society (education, politics, sports, and business) between May 26 and June 15, 2020 that expressed sympathy with the Black Lives Matter Movement. We conducted this research to argue that failure to acknowledge personal/institutional wrongdoings in the past combined with the failure to provide concrete measures to change policy and practice raises questions about whether or not the statements were designed to actually fix prevailing injustices in America’s institutions or to fleetingly reckon with White silence. We contend “performative authenticity” in the form of routine and hollow public declarations without tangible action that appease White emotionality and serve as a mechanism to express allyship with historically terrorized communities. Without tangible action, it is reasonable for People of Color to consider such statements micro-aggressive actions. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study evaluates each statement's content using a grading metric designed by the Equity Institute for Race Conscious Pedagogy, LLC. It is found that statements displaying greater empathy and understanding about anti-Black racism along with those that offer concrete answers to end systemic anti-People of Color racism are commonly authored by women, People of Color, and liberal-leaning individuals, institutions, and organizations. We also discovered that the best statements are written by educators, CEOs, politicians, and athletic organizations that seek guidance from a diverse panel of advisors. Finally, we uncovered that those groups for which the statements are intended want fewer statements of regret, guilt, and repentance, and more practical action plans that explain how individual institutions, organizations and schools will disrupt racist behavior and inequitable policies.

This study exposes the differences between good and empathetic public statements and can serve as a guide to how schools, school districts, institutions of higher education leadership, and other American institutions can comfort student bodies during traumatic experiences.

**Keywords:**

Performative wokeness, virtue signaling, brand activism, authenticity gap, critical discourse analysis, critical race theory, institutional racism, systemic racism, White liberalism, race-consciousness, micro-aggressions, micro-invalidations



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 25, 2020, an altercation erupted between 46-year-old George Floyd and four Minneapolis police officers. The officers had responded to a 911 call claiming that Floyd used a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy cigarette at Cup Foods, a family-owned grocery store. During the altercation, Floyd was wrestled to the ground. For more than nine minutes, Floyd was pressed into the pavement with Officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on his neck while three other officers refused to deescalate the situation. Despite pleas for Floyd's life, Chauvin kept kneeling on his neck. He died shortly after falling unconscious. Black Lives Matter sponsored protests erupted nationwide and globally after video of Floyd's death surfaced. While central to the protest were demands for the arrest and imprisonment of all four Minnesota officers, Black Lives Matter supporters also insisted on justice for Breonna Taylor, 26-year-old Black woman killed when police officers broke into her home while serving a late-night no-knock warrant on suspicion that she received packages on behalf of a man suspected of drug trafficking in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>1</sup>

This research examines public statements issued by state and federal public officials, professional athletes and professional governing associations, large and small businesses, and educators in PK-12 and higher education that express support for Black Lives Matter and condemning systemic racism in the aftermath of the police and vigilante killings of Floyd, Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks. Data collection occurred during May 26, 2020 and June 15, 2020. The quality of each statement was graded on a scale of 8 total points.

This report is intended to offer politicians, celebrities, athletes, educators and other social archetypes a more holistic understanding of what Communities of Color and White allies expect in public statements condemning anti-Black racism. This report also offers guidance and examples for how to write a meaningful and actionable public statement that expresses both empathy for Black, Indigenous and People of Color who endure systemic oppression and provides details about taking action to fix equity problem areas existent in institutions, governing bodies, and schools.

## THE FOLLOWING KEY FINDINGS EMERGED FROM OUR ANALYSIS

**31%** Public statements provide clear meaningful action steps to fix institutional problems of inequity.

**55%** Public statements mention the killing of George Floyd

**19%** Public statements recognize the killing of Breonna Taylor

**24%** Public statements express regret for silence and complicity in perpetuating inequitable structures.

**15%** Public statements explicitly say there is a problem of police violence

**35%** Public statements went beyond individual racist behavior by specifically naming “institutional,” “structural,” or “systemic racism”

**45%** Public statements openly describe the death of George Floyd as an act of “violence,” a “murder,” or killing.”

**15%** Public statements discuss institutional problems with policing, while avoiding the “bad apples” argument

Public statements issued by the nine GOVERNORS up for re-election received lower grades on their public statements than those governors that don't have to worry about re-election 2020. Democratic governors running for re-election scored higher than Republican governors running for re-election.

Of the 11 states holding gubernatorial elections in 2020, nine states have governors running for re-election. The following is how we graded statements issued by governors running for re-election: John Carney Jr. (D-DE) scored a 1, Eric Holcomb (R-IN) scored a 1, Mike Parson (R-MO) scored a 2, Chris Sununu (R-NH) scored a 1, Roy Cooper (D-NC) scored a 4, Doug Burgum (R-ND) scored a 1, Phil Scott (R-VT) scored a 5, and Jay Inslee (D-WA) scored a 5. Jim Justice (R-WV) did not release a statement. The average score of these nine governors was 2.22 out of a scale of 8.0. Compared to Democrats in this category, Republican governors generally released lower-scoring statements, and it is also worth noting that there is no correlation with the intersecting variables of race and gender because all nine governors are White males.

Of those in the EXECUTIVE BRANCH, just seven Cabinet members, plus the POTUS and VPOTUS, had something to say about race relations following the murder of George Floyd to a Minneapolis police officer.

A 36% participation rate from the highest ranking federal government officials offered solutions to institutional problems in law enforcement. The average score for all statements by the executive branch analyzed was 2.5 points out of a total of 8 points. The breakdown of the scores is as follows: two 1s, three 2s, four 3s, and two 4s. Not a single statement from the POTUS, VPOTUS, or Cabinet admitted expressed regret in remaining silent about structural forms anti-Black racism.

Statements by female GOVERNORS received higher scores than male governors. Female governors in the Democratic Party scored higher than those in the Republican Party.

The average score of the statements from nine female governors was 4.00 out of 8, and the average score of the statements from 41 male governors was 2.63 out of 8. However, because there is a low percentage of female governors in the United States, there are no particularly strong correlations between gender and strength of statement overall. Of the nine female governors, six are Democrat and three are Republican. Of the 41 male governors, 18 are Democrat and 23 are Republican.

Few statements by U.S. SENATORS reflect meaningful action against systemic racism.

Just 11% of released statements illustrate how the U.S. Senator plans to take action to disrupt systemic racism, in particular in law enforcement. Ten percent of Democratic Senators offered a strategy while only 1% of Republicans disclosed a plan.

In nearly all demographic breakdowns of U.S. SENATORS, such as race, gender, or re-election status, Democrats score higher, on average, than Republicans.

The 45 Democratic Senators scored an average of 3.34 points out of 8 total points, while the 53 Republicans earned a mean score of 2.13 points. With the breakdown analysis, male Democrats scored higher than male Republicans, female Democrats scored higher than female Republicans, White Democrats scored higher than White Republicans, and Democrats of Color scored higher than Republicans of Color. The largest difference in average score was between Democrats up for re-election (who received a mean score of 4.00) compared to Republicans up for re-election (who averaged 1.94 points).

Hot-button topics including statements that condemn corrupt policing, acknowledging wrongdoings to People of Color, disclosing plans to take action, and addressing institutional and systemic racism were rarely mentioned by Republican SENATORS.

In the few instances when Republicans did mention the more controversial topics, the statements tended to be weaker and deficient of calls for action. These statements also drew more criticism from the public. When statements were released in the form of a tweet, the public was quicker to respond with disappointment or anger than when Democratic senators tweeted courageous statements.

Statements from U.S. SENATORS were weak overall, regardless of political affiliation.

Scores higher than four (>50%) were uncommon. The only breakdowns that received an average score higher than four were the nine Senators of Color, the five Males of Color, the 10 male Democrats up for re-election in 2020, and the six Democrats of Color who received the highest average score of 4.33 points. The most common score for the individual Senators was a 2. Thirty percent of all Senators received a 2 out of 8 points.

America's public school districts were apprehensive about announcing meaningful action plans.

Just 36% of urban districts, 14% of suburban districts, and 4% of rural districts provide detailed steps to change the culture of the student-body and the staff and rarely mention plans to amend policies and curriculum to help students from historically marginalized groups.

Medium-sized colleges and universities wrote more meaningful public statements than large-sized and small-sized colleges and universities, but not by a large margin; and the scores are disappointing.

Of the 192 public statements written by colleges and universities that we collected, medium-sized schools accumulated a higher mean score of 3 points out of 8 possible points. On the contrary, large and small colleges and universities earned mean scores of 2.92 and 2.93 points, respectively.

Urban school districts were more likely to release a public statement about Black Lives Matter than rural and suburban school districts. However, less than 10% of urban, suburban, and rural districts combined used language endorsing police reform.

We found that 100% of the urban districts released a statement, while just 30% of suburban districts and 6% of rural districts issued statements. 72% of urban school districts did not comment on police reform policy while just 8% criticized policing directly. For suburban school districts, only 14% mentioned police brutality and 7% addressed policing reform. We conferred the lowest score to rural school districts. Just 4% of rural districts said something about police brutality while 2% endorsed reforms to law enforcement

Widespread protests in the wake of George Floyd's death provided educators with an opportunity to address systemic issues that link school districts to the prison industrial complex; and yet, very few school districts wrote statements eluding to efforts that would dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

We discovered 72% of urban school districts did not comment on police reform. As for statements written by suburban and rural school districts, 84% and 94%, respectively, avoided mentioning police brutality.

# **Section One**

# **Study Framework**

# Introduction

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Two events, each with catastrophic consequences, occurred during the spring of 2020 that exposed many structural and institutional inequities existent in virtually every public and even private sector of American society – ranging from federal and state government, managed healthcare and educational services, and law enforcement operations to corporations, professional sports affiliations, and other privately owned and operated entities. These twin pandemics rocked the nation, forcing a racial reckoning across the United States, especially in the White community.

The first event was the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic that, at this writing, has infected 20.2 million global citizens and taken the lives of 738,000 people. In the United States alone, COVID-19 has infected 5.1 million Americans and killed 164,000 people. The virus has had disproportionate effects on historically under-resourced communities, particularly Communities of Color that face historic and structural disparities in social determinants that include access to healthcare, health insurance, and ability to take time off work, language barriers, and lack of transportation. These communities also face disproportionate responsibilities to show up as essential workers in healthcare facilities, grocery stores, and public transportation. Other obstacles to health and well-being include overcrowded housing and increased risks of eviction, and disparities in education.<sup>2</sup> According to The Covid Tracking Project, a collaborative undertaking between the COVID Tracking Project and Boston University's Center for Antiracist Research that gathers race and ethnicity data on COVID-19 in the United States, Black Americans are dying at 2.5 times the rate of White Americans. The report shows that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have higher death rates per 100,000 people. There are 80 African Americans deaths per 100,000 people. The rate for Latinxs is 46 deaths per 100,000 people. American Indians or Alaska Natives die at a rate of 44 per 100,000 people while 34 Asian Americans die per 100,000 people. The rate for White Americans is 32 per every 100,000 people.<sup>3</sup> The *Washington Post* reported in June that 31% of Black Americans know someone who died of COVID-19, compared to 17% of Latinxs and just 9% of White Americans.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports indicate that Black and Latinx children are more likely to be hospitalized than White children. A study released in mid-August 2020 found Latinx children hospitalized at a rate of 16.4 per 100,000 people and Black children at 10.5 per 100,000 people. White children are hospitalized at a rate of 2.1 per 100,000. Another CDC report says 74% of children with multisystem inflammatory syndrome, or MIS-C, a condition that includes fever, rash, inflammation, stomach problems, and shock that may lead to organ failure and heart damage, are Black and Latinx.<sup>5</sup>

Also in June, Black Lives Matter sponsored rallies and protests against systemic racism swept the nation and the world after stories about the police killings of George Floyd, 46, Breonna Taylor, 26, and Rayshard Brooks, 27, appeared in the mainstream media. Repressed frustrations ascended further to a level not observed since the 1960s, as cellphone videos captured the vigilante murder of Ahmaud Arbery, 26, and a White woman threatening to call the New York Police Department on an African American birdwatcher in Manhattan's Central Park. The combination of these stories ignited large-scale Black Lives Matter-inspired protests against state violence and systemic racism in all 50 states, in more than 2,000 U.S. cities and towns, and in more than 60 sympathetic countries.<sup>6</sup>

Primetime media coverage of the protests, which began May 26, 2020, the day after Floyd's death, served to enlighten many White Americans about the pain and suffering associated with systemic problems endured by Black Americans. The historically significant protests revealed to many Whites what critical race theorist Derrick A. Bell argued decades ago, that dual forms of racism—private racists and systemic racism, commonly called White supremacy—never disappears; instead, it adapts with each symbolic victory. And there are important victories to cite in America's history: the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments; the *Brown v. Board* ruling in 1954; and the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States.<sup>7</sup> The protests were about exposing the natural makeup of America—a pronouncement that since racism is part of the country's genetic composition, embedded within the concept of a racial hierarchy and resultant White-supremacist oppression afflicting Black communities—that there is not an area of American life devoid of structural injustice.

Within a week of the first protest, colleges and universities, PK-12 school districts, corporations, professional sports teams and their governing leagues, and local, state and federal lawmakers issued public statements expressing support for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. While the statements by leaders in these areas of the American public vary, most expressed solidarity with Black Americans and affirmed that they, their institution, or their organization would do more to fight for racial equality. The statements, given by individuals and institutions representing both liberal and conservative views, promised to be more reflective about supporting Black Americans.

Temporal context that includes the viral video recordings of the Arbery, Floyd, and Brooks' deaths at the hands of law enforcement as well as ongoing coverage of Taylor's death in addition to so-called "Kens and Karens" calling the police on Black Americans in public spaces; along with incessant media revelations over the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), provide insight into the political climate that compelled more than 800 governmental, educational, athletic, and corporate individuals and institutions to take a moral stance against racism. That figure does not include the individuals, schools, and organizations making statements that were not collected by our researchers. Nonetheless, from various points of view, our research reveals a major shift in rhetoric by conservative-minded voices and liberal Whites, particularly in the corporate and sports arenas that often maintain racial colorblindness as an ideology to best treat racial and ethnic minorities equally and to end racism.

One of the most glaring redactions of past condemnation for social justice crusading came from National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell. After years spent in opposition to Colin Kaepernick's knee-protest against police violence and other forms of racial injustice, Goodell conceded on June 5, 2020, "We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest."<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising to see elected officials, scholars in the academy, and civic-minded nonprofit organizations go public in the aftermath of the BLM demonstrations. It is also not wholly shocking to see big brand companies

and professional sports leagues embrace what is known as brand-activism to take a stand on matters of social justice. Today, it has become equally common for the public to expect educational, corporate, and governing bodies to elevate their voices alongside protesters, especially after seeing footage of a defenseless Black man lose his life to a White Minneapolis police officer. According to a Pew Research Center study conducted one month after the peak period of the BLM-inspired protests, 67% of all adults expressed support the movement for Black lives.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, a June survey conducted by Mitto, a leading provider of global omnichannel communications solutions that supports business growth with advanced customer engagement technology, shows 73% of Americans said it is important for big brand companies and nonprofits to release statements voicing support for BLM. However, the same study, which surveyed 1,000 Americans, maintains that the statements are only meaningful if “followed by measurable action.”<sup>10</sup>



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Given our research in light of the Mitto survey results, a textual analysis of 831 statements reveals that an astounding 97% made no reference to “systemic” or “institutional” racism, thus undermining the BLM message while presenting themselves or their institution as a new ally in the movement for Black lives. That statistic does not mean the statements didn’t condemn “racism.” In fact, the subtext of 100% of the statements was a rebuke of racism. This study, nevertheless, carefully examined language used to delineate institutional and systemic racism versus private racist behavior. Most statements condemned the latter. In one glaring sense, therefore, the statements center Whiteness only to reassure White emotions instead of asserting bold claims that remove the burden of racism off People of Color’s shoulders and transfer it to Whites.

Probing the statements further, we find that most statements come across as micro-invalidations in three ways: (1) by failing to acknowledge

problematic areas in their institutions that compound systemic inequities; (2) by lacking a concrete explanation concerning what meaningful changes the individual or organization will make to support the cause of racial justice; and (3), by using language that absolves White Americans for their role in historical and contemporary oppression.

Professor of Education at UCLA Tyrone C. Howard praises such public disavowals of racism as “encouraging” and suggests that the statements can “offer guarded optimism.” However, he asserts, “a healthy dose of skepticism is in order” when schools, large and small businesses (including the sports industry), and lawmakers fetishize wokeness while retaining a reputation for ignoring racist policies that undergird their very institution.<sup>11</sup> Such statements addressing generalizations about White privilege come across as acts of virtue-signaling and performative wokeness while feigning benevolence and self-reflection that generally amounts to little action.

**“Such statements . . . come across as acts of virtue signaling and performative wokeness while feigning benevolence and self-reflection that generally amounts to little action.”**

In this sense, mostly White educators, White CEOs, White athletic coaches, White professional sports team owners, and White lawmakers position themselves as reborn antiracist crusaders, impelled into action by the

deaths of Floyd, Taylor, Arbery, and Brooks. The statements aside, it is reasonable to ask: what excuse can explain why White America had to wait until 2020 to acknowledge anti-Black racism as a problem now worth attention? For instance, why did it take until the summer of 2020 for any Secretary of Defense to bar the Confederate flag—a symbol of a group of people that attempted to secede from the United States—from U.S. military installations?<sup>12</sup> Until recently, polls suggest, upward of 70% of White American parents are regrettably silent when it comes to race talk with their children.<sup>13</sup>

To the credit of the authors of the 831 statements collected for this study, the recent revelation that educational, political, corporate, and athletic leaders of this country have shed the disposition of colorblindness for race consciousness is encouraging. Then again, it is also suspect to scrutiny. Herein lies the ultimate question of this study: why does it appear that the authors of statements voicing support of BLM center regret in a way that only reinforces the preexisting racial hierarchy by presenting themselves as enlightened enough to be aware of their privilege while unwilling to actually dismantle the racist structures omnipresent across their entire industry?<sup>14</sup> Therefore, we set out to explore whether these performative gestures in the form of antiracist statements possess redeeming power.

To honestly confront problems of structural racism in American society, leaders must begin with the question of how to reform their own institution. Sadly, the 831 public statements we collected and evaluated provide little comfort that institutions, schools, lawmakers or corporations will meet the challenges of housing injustice, residential segregation,

gentrification, overwhelmingly White and male board rooms, needed changes to the leadership structure of professional sports; or changes to the way schools go about identifying and fixing equity problem areas. Less than a handful of the statements' authors, which happen to be all Democratic lawmakers, even mentioned reparations as a solution for the wealth gap caused by the practice and legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and de jure housing segregation. When looking over the data, it seems that what mattered most to the authors was giving a public statement that virtue-signaled solidarity with the victims of anti-Black racism by declaring they would work to disrupt their own previously unchecked racist presumptions.

Just a fraction of the statements, no matter what score they received per our grading metric, matured into righteous action by the end of the summer. Princeton University, which received a reassuring 5 out of 8 score on our metric, provides a signature example of taking action after issuing a statement. Near the end of June, the Ivy League institution removed Woodrow Wilson's name from the School of Public and International Affairs and Wilson College.<sup>15</sup> Around the same time, Quaker Oates, a PepsiCo subsidiary whose statement scored 4 points out of 8, announced it is changing the name and image of the Aunt Jemima breakfast brand for its 130-year depiction of an African American minstrel character on its syrup and pancake mixes. Dreyer's Ice Cream revealed it is renaming its Eskimo Pie brand, conceding "Eskimo" is a slur toward indigenous people of the Arctic. The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, which received a meager score of 3 points out of 8, shocked many when it removed three plaques commemorating Confederate soldiers from its Quad and main library. The institution's trustees likewise pledged to review

the names of buildings on all campuses in the University of Alabama System.<sup>16</sup> And country music's Dixie Chicks informed fans that the band renamed itself The Chicks to distance themselves from the antebellum era slave-owning-South.<sup>17</sup>

It is correct to suppose that decisions like those mentioned above are positive steps forward. Each deed is a distinct declaration about representation. While still flawed for reasons this report will get to momentarily, changing names and removing racist caricatures is an encouraging first-step toward a multiracial democracy.

Similarly, ornamental do-gooding appeared in gestures like that of the NFL's announcement that it would play James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing," otherwise known as the "Negro National Anthem," before each game of the opening weekend of the 2020 season. There is also the decision by the WNBA to put "Black Lives Matter" and "Say Her Name" on official warm-up shirts, and to embroider the names of Breonna Taylor and Sandra Bland on game jerseys.<sup>18</sup> Of course, there are others that didn't draw the same level of attention as the NFL and WNBA. One such action was made by The Houston Association of Realtors that proclaimed its real estate agents would no longer refer to a home's primary bedroom as the "master" bedroom for its connotations to slavery.<sup>19</sup>

But not everyone is euphoric about such conspicuous changes. Linguist and Columbia University professor John McWhorter says such actions drift into the "realm of posturing" while ignoring real problems that perpetuate systems that mar the well-being of Black Americans.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Princeton African American studies

professor Imani Perry calls these actions “cosmetic change,” claiming that while honorable, removing or altering racist and toxic symbols only serves to placate historically marginalized groups if internal structural changes don’t follow.<sup>21</sup> Take, for example, the way Nike has taken bold steps to confront racism in America. Nike is lauded for its solidarity with Colin Kaepernick since the ex-quarterback’s exclusion from the NFL following the 2016 season. Just days after issuing its public statement sympathizing with BLM, the sports apparel company announced it is donating \$40 million to support social justice causes. Equally remarkable, Nike collaborated with big brand companies, namely FedEx and PepsiCo, to pressure Dan Snyder, owner of the professional football team in Washington D.C., to change a nickname long considered a racial slur. While those actions are noble, Nike still has an internal diversity problem. Records from 2019 indicate that less than 10% of its 300-plus vice-presidents worldwide are People of Color, leaving scholars like Perry to doubt whether the inclusion of BIPOC into the



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as powerful  
carriers of racial  
discourse about  
the past and the  
present.**

“body politics [can] be taken seriously.” Nike also faces criticism for paying its workers in Asia far below a living wage. The Clean Clothes Campaign, a labor and human rights advocacy group working globally to improve working conditions, claims Nike’s workers earn between 65-90 cents per hour and are forced to work up to 48 hours a week, with some reports suggesting workers spend up to 60 hours a week at work.<sup>22</sup> In the United States, 77% of Nike’s vice presidents are White, while People of Color make up 53% of its total workforce.

Nike is not the only big brand corporation called out by the public for hypocrisy. Amazon’s CEO, Jeff Bezos, has been criticized for underpaying his employees risking their lives while delivering packages to customers during the coronavirus pandemic. Hiring disparities also exist inside Amazon. Just 8% of Amazon’s managers in the United States are Black, but 60% of its warehouse and delivery workers in most cities are People of Color.<sup>23</sup> Nike and Amazon are companies that have the means to fix problems within their organizations. Instead, Nike,

Amazon, and other corporations play a mixed-game of conscious raising and relative action, which renders efforts to change structural racism futile.

The public statement from Adidas, on the other hand, offers a humbling lesson on owning up to institutional shortfalls and how to pledge publicly an action plan to fill those gaps. Claiming “[It is] time to own up to our silence,” Adidas disclosed its own damning workforce analysis, conceding to past practice in hiring discrimination. The company pledged to fill at least 30% of its new positions in the United States at Adidas and Reebok with Black and Latinx workers. The company also announced it would invest \$120 million into Black communities before 2024, fund 50 educational scholarships for Black students annually, and increase diversity in its company by reserving jobs for the disabled, veterans, and LGBTQ+ workers. “For most of you, this message is too little, too late,” Adidas conceded in its statement posted on Twitter. “We celebrated athletes and artists in the Black community and used their image to define ourselves culturally as a brand, but missed the message in reflecting such little representation within our walls.”<sup>24</sup>

What is of interest in our study is the increasingly unique and understudied role that virtue-signaling currently plays in American public racial discourse, where a statement by a company or institution expressing support for Black people in the struggle against anti-Black racism but never does anything about its employees that disagree with that sentiment. Moreover, we were interested in discovering whether a public statement evolved into an effort to value the perspectives of Employees of Color and Students of Color whose voices are

previously marginalized although their presence is often tolerated solely to make majority-White institutions appear more diverse.

A glaring omission from an overwhelming majority (76%) of the public statements—and a reason why many statements receive medium-to-low scores on our metric—are confessions about past transgressions. Sure, some statement authors, mainly those coming from corporations, pledged donations to racial justice advocacy; however, there is little attempt to express regret for years of actively shutting out Black voices. And just 31% of those statements—including follow-ups to those initial statements—say something specific about how the individual or institution plans to disrupt entrenched discrimination within its organization.

To issue a statement condemning anti-Black racism while also expressing solidarity with oppressed groups is the right thing. Indeed, this survey collected 831 statements that did just that. Nonetheless, this study digs below the surface. It aims to distinguish between those politicians, schools, sports teams, and corporations that issued statements that come across as tone-deaf against those that offer meaningful solutions to systemic racism. These are voices that represent America. Some are professional athletes. Several dozen are job creators. Many are educators. Others control local, state, and federal policy. Collectively, they shape our culture and thus influence the nation's direction, which is why we felt it essential to interrogate their words in the aftermath of the great racial reckoning of the current generation. For the good and the bad, these statements exist as powerful carriers of racial discourse about the past and the present.

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# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## *Critical Discourse Analysis*

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**TO** understand the motivation behind issuing public statements supporting

Black Lives Matter in 2020, we turn to critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory, which posits that social relations and communication methods (in our case, social media and websites) between two or more entities (the statement authors and the Black community) carries a sub-textual power meaning. With this in mind, CDA has proven useful for understanding motivational processes.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, CDA suggests that the statements issued by organizations or individuals (Entity A) that traditionally owns a colorblind posture on matters of anti-Black racism and police brutality are written in a way that introduces newfound solidarity with People of Color (Entity B). The authors, overwhelmingly White or representing majority-White organizations, hope that their past will not obstruct a newly minted identity. And yet, the intent of soft language used in the statements strives to circumvent financial and political loss. The power of people who control big brand companies is partly discursive. For example, it depends on how much money the company will lose before breaking silence on a social issue.<sup>26</sup> Yet, big brand

companies also possess the resources (financial, social capital, and otherwise) that could do more good in helping create a multiracial democracy.

Consequently, power is not simply a matter of discourse. Rather, power and discourse fuse into a single concept underpinning every public statement about Black Lives Matter. Educators, CEOs, politicians, and other social archetypes must meet challenges of systemic racism and anticipate new ones; therefore, each statement cannot be analyzed other than in terms of the dialectical relations between color-evasive Entity A (corporate, educational, athletic, and politicians) with racialized Entity B (People of Color, particularly African Americans). To do this, we examine how CDA redefine abstraction leadership and alter discourse to meet the needs of America's most vulnerable.

While utilizing a CDA lens, our research on 831 statements contends that the 2020 public responses to Black Lives Matter fall short of ensuring a strategy that implements institutional reforms to end the sense of exclusion for BIPOC. This argument suggests that solidarity statements without real action resorts back to White comfort while offering lip service to Black Americans.

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# ***THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK***

## ***Legislative Apologies for Slavery, 2007-2009***

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**ONE** of the

biggest moments in recent history having to do with powerful bodies issuing symbolic gestures for historic injustices occurred between 2007 and 2009. At that time, the state legislatures of Virginia, Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina as well as the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate passed legislative resolutions apologizing for their role in sustaining the institution of slavery and tolerating the apartheid system popularly known as “Jim Crow.” The first state to issue an apology was Virginia, once home to 472,528 enslaved Africans and the former capital of the Confederacy. On February 22, 2007, the Virginia Senate passed a resolution stating regret for slavery in addition to the treatment of Native Americans. Two days later, the Virginia House voted unanimously on the same bill, stating, “That the General Assembly hereby acknowledge with profound regret the involuntary servitude of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans.”<sup>27</sup>

In point of fact, the statements of regret by Virginia and the seven state legislatures that

followed her example, as well as the apologies by U.S. Congresspersons, were met with criticism by Whites and Blacks. On one hand, Whites believed there was no reason that any legislative body, let alone individual, needed to issue an apology because no living person had anything to do with enslaving Black persons. Black citizens “should just get over it” proclaimed 79-year-old Frank D. Hargrove, Republican member of the Virginia House of Delegates.<sup>28</sup> Resistance to the apology movement was so fierce in some places that predominantly White state assemblies in Georgia and Delaware underwent ugly deliberations that ultimately voted against passing apologetic resolutions. Whites throughout the country feared that the apologies opened the door for passing reparations legislation.

On the other hand, Black Americans considered the statements performative gestures. Despite the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s approbation for the U.S. Senate’s resolution, stating, “[Although the apology] doesn’t fix everything, but it does go a long way toward acknowledgement and moving us on to the next step to building a more perfect union,” Black opinion writers, including Clarence Page

of the *Chicago Daily News*, found each apology short of an admission of guilt. While the state resolutions cited “reconciliation” and “contribution,” the apologies were “watered down,” wrote one columnist, and came off as expressions of regret as if the states had no connection to the institution of slavery. Under the guise of an apology, several states expressed “profound regret,” a combination of words used to soften responsibility for slavery by conspicuous expressions of sorrow for circumstances beyond the control of each state legislature. In 2005, almost half of Black Americans did not support the forthcoming apologies for slavery, according to University of Chicago political science professor, Michael Dawson.<sup>29</sup> By 2007, most Black Americans considered the apologies “vague ‘catchall’ statements” that resulted in no systemic changes. One dissenting voice was then-presidential candidate Barack Obama. He said on the campaign trail, “If I’m president, certainly I could issue an apology, but I’m not sure . . . that’s what would transform the country.”<sup>30</sup> Black Americans and White allies shared his opinion that each apology, or expression of profound regret, should be replaced by tangible policies addressing slavery’s legacy in health care, the economy, and education. While White opponents of the resolutions feared the distribution of monetary reparations for slavery, African Americans assumed that anything short of recompense “wouldn’t be worth a Confederate penny,” reported journalist Robert Russell.<sup>31</sup> The biggest grievance against these public statements was the failure to “specifically address the impact of slavery and Jim Crow on present-day racial disparities,” writes

historian Angelique M. Davis.<sup>32</sup> Echoing protestations by Black America-at-large, she explains, lawmakers missed the opportunity to pass legislation that would close racial gaps in wealth, health, unemployment, housing, and education.

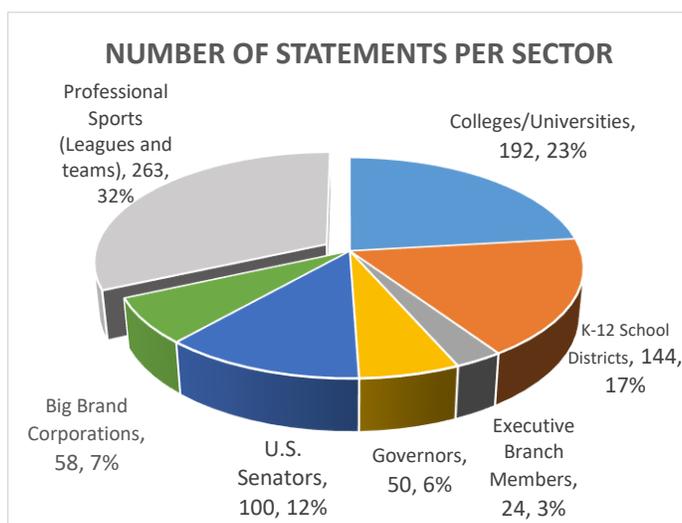
What can we learn from the public discourse over the 2007-2008 legislative apologies for slavery? For those that the resolutions intended to heal, the public statements, while courageous, did nothing to disrupt the racial hierarchy. The apologies, which cost state and federal lawmakers nothing financially, lacked action steps to effect systemic changes to move the nation closer to a multiracial democracy. In hindsight, the actual recipients of the resolutions were White Americans. The apologies were performative measures that pardoned majority-White state governments and the majority-White U.S. Congress for their respective roles in sustaining the so-called “slaveocracy” followed by the apartheid state. And the apologies also did much to stymie arguments for reparation at that moment in history.<sup>33</sup> It is the discourse over the public apologies that guided the rigid scoring metric (see pages 20-21) we created to grade the public statements embracing Black Lives Matter in May and June 2020.

Similar to the slavery apologies, the reduction and comprehensive dismissal of systemic racism observed in the political, sports, corporate, and educational spheres of American society as shown in the public statements of May-June 2020 functioned to absolve White Americans of generations of color-evasive policy and practices.

# METHOD AND MEASURES

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To compile the most comprehensive data on public statements expressing support for Black Lives Matter while denouncing systemic and institutional racism, we collected public statements from the following sectors of education, business, sports, and politics: (1) colleges and universities; (2) PK-12 school districts; (3) professional sports teams and professional sports' regulating bodies, (4) individual players and coaches, (5) large and small corporations, (6) all 100 U.S. Senators, (7) the Executive Branch of the United States government, including the President of the United States and the presidential cabinet, and (8) all 50 U.S. governors.



To assess how members of each sector addressed the events sparked by the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor during spring 2020, we collected statements posted on social media and websites between May 26 and June 15. We identified all statements, whether on Twitter, Facebook, or official websites, or in the case of politicians, the Senate floor and White House Rose Garden, that directly responded to Floyd's death, the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, or events related to race in America.

After locating public statements, we conducted a content analysis of each statement by using a grading metric that scored statements out of eight possible points. The metric featured eight rubric rows that asked eight "yes/no" questions. They were as follows:

- Row 1: Did the statement use the words "violence," "murder," or "killing"
- Row 2: Did the statement acknowledge the existence of "Institutional Racism," "Structural Racism," or "Systemic Racism"
- Row 3: Did the statement say there was an *issue with over policing Black communities* or, at least, condemn police brutality
- Row 4: Did the statement recognize institutional problems with policing, while avoiding the "bad apples" argument
- Row 5: Did the statement specifically state George Floyd's name
- Row 6: Did the statement recognize Breonna Taylor's death

- Row 7: Did the statement acknowledge institutional wrongdoings to People of Color (citizens, students, athletes, employees, clients, consumers), such enabling an exclusionary social climate that undervalued the voices of underrepresented communities
- Row 8: Did the statement provide a vision for meaningful action steps to create a more inclusive institutional environment

Each individual person, organization, corporation, professional sports league, professional sports team, college and university, and PK-12 school district received a point for each “yes” answer. After giving each statement a score out of eight, we then considered complex variables found in the data of each person, organization, corporation, governing body, professional sports league, professional sports team, college and university, and PK-12 school. As noted in the introduction and on pages 18 and 19, this metric was developed after studying the public reaction to apologies for slavery issued by eight state legislatures and the U.S. House and Senate in 2007 and 2009, when the Black public desired actions taken to implement structural changes in addition to statements of regret.

Since the highest score on our rubric is eight points, we consider poor public statements to be those of 3 or lower. An average evaluation received a score of 4 or 5. Stronger statements were those given a score of 6 or higher.

# HYPOTHESES

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This study sought to extend past research on statements of support for Black Lives Matter specifically by investigating how multiple sectors of American society (primary, secondary, and postsecondary education, large and small businesses, the sports industry, and state and federal politicians) responded in the moment of the *great racial reckoning of May-June 2020* and how sincere those public statements were as seen through past and present actions regarding longstanding and entrenched policies of oppression. The duration of this study doesn't afford us the chance to examine if institutional changes follow the statements. As a result, we concentrate on the text, context, and subtext of all 831 statements.

- Overall Hypothesis: We expect organizations and individuals to offer little to no detail about changing operational structures (governance, policy) that maintain inequities in each institution.

Below are our hypotheses for each sector.

## Hypotheses: U.S. Senators

- Hypothesis 1: Before analyzing the statements, we predicted that Democratic senators would score higher, on average, than Republican senators.
- Hypothesis 2: The police killing of George Floyd occurred on May 25, 2020. President Trump released his first statement about Floyd's death on June 1 to address the nation's ongoing unrest.<sup>34</sup> Though his remarks lasted seven minutes, Trump mentioned Floyd's death for less than 30 seconds. The rest of the statement focused on protesting, destroying property, and mobilizing federal resources like the National Guard. Because of this, we envisioned that statements by Republican senators would mirror that of President Trump.
- Hypothesis 3: We did not expect many GOP senators to disagree with or criticize Trump since there is seemingly no incentive for Republican elected officials to do so. Trump maintains unprecedented support within his party, so we expect Republican senators to fear losing their voters' support by disagreeing with President Trump. We predict that Republican senators would follow suit and focus their statements more on the violence/rebellion featured in some of the Black Lives Matters sponsored protests instead of Floyd's death.
- Hypothesis 4: We anticipate Republicans will support Trump's call for militarization and continue to praise law enforcement members despite the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor due to partisan affiliation.

## Hypotheses: Governors

We expect to see a sharp split between political parties within the topic of American governors and their statements regarding the killing of George Floyd because many politicians identify solely with their political party's beliefs. We also expect an unusually distinct split among political ideals relating to the Black Lives Matter movement because neither side is eager to admit its fault in perpetuating institutional racism, which causes society's polarization to intensify further. In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery in the United States. Although this granted freedom to four million enslaved Africans, it authorized forced servitude as a criminal punishment. The 13th Amendment provided an opportunity for Southerners and pro-slavery Northerners to charge African Americans with petty crimes, thus keeping slavery and the prosperous Southern economy alive. Studies show that White populations today in states and counties once dependent upon slavery in 1860 are found to possess a greater implicit bias.<sup>35</sup> With this information, we expect:

- Hypothesis 1: That Southern governors will be less likely to support the Black Lives Matter movement, and will therefore receive lower scores than governors in the Northeast, Midwest, and West.
- Hypothesis 2: Because there is a higher concentration of Republican governors in the South, we presume that these states will receive generally lower scores than states with Democratic governors.
- Hypothesis 3: With President Donald Trump and his Administration rarely acknowledging or supporting the movement for Black lives, we further expect Republican governors to release statements with positions similar to Trump's. We also expect governors who express support for Trump on social media to score lower than other governors for this same reason.
- Hypothesis 4: Although there are only nine female governors, we expect each of them to release, on average, higher-scoring statements than male governors. This is largely because 6 out of 9 female governors are Democrats, and as previously discussed, we expect Democrats to score higher on our scale generally.
- Hypothesis 5: We believe White governors will release lower-scoring statements than Governors of Color, regardless of their political affiliation. This prediction is represented in a June 2020 Pew Research Center study indicating that 71% of Black Americans "strongly support" the Black Lives Matter movement, while just 31% of White Americans feel the same way.<sup>36</sup>
- Hypothesis 6: We expect governors running for re-election in 2020 to have slightly lower scores than governors remaining in office because they are more likely to avoid divisive language and policies when a large voting constituency is at stake.

## Hypotheses: The Executive Branch of the United States Government

Before the start of this research, we hoped to read about policy reform in the wake of the Black Lives Matter sponsored protests of May and June 2020. It is necessary, then, to examine how the current

President of the United States and his Cabinet work to improve the pressing issues propagating systemic racism. Among our questions was whether the countless pleas for change emanating from the protests would be in vain? Or perhaps, was this generation going to benefit from a time when the appeals by reformers have been answered? One moment at the center of that query is the quest for gun reform following the February 14, 2018 deadly shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland, Florida that resulted in the deaths of 17 students. In light of the many students that lost their lives to gun violence at Parkland and elsewhere, activists took to the streets hoping to convince lawmakers to enact change. In wake of these shootings, President Trump tweeted, "We can never forget them, and those many who came before them. Republicans and Democrats must come together and get strong background checks."<sup>37</sup> Despite the President's words, the cries of gun reform activists resulted in no reform. Thus, in light of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and the many other lives lost to police brutality, we wonder if results would be different this time.

As our study transitioned to scrutinizing the statements by members of the executive branch of the federal government, we presumed that many members of the presidential cabinet would not have made public statements. Accordingly, we did not expect to see any sense of urgency towards change from the Trump Administration, which stifled students' cries just two years ago. We expect hollow words from President Trump and other members of the Executive Branch when examining statements about the Black Lives Matter protests. In fact, we anticipate remarks that will deflect responsibility about the shortcomings of the criminal justice system (Hypothesis 1). After conducting a content analysis on all statements, we anticipate no admission of personal responsibility, as doing so could jeopardize support from the voting public, in particular, the President's base (Hypothesis 2). President Trump carries a reputation for defending the police. He has also, on many occasions, touted himself as "your president of law and order." Since President Trump often uses signifying racialized language when speaking about law enforcement, we expect to see the statements siding with the police while maligning Black Lives Matter (Hypothesis 3).

## **Hypotheses: Colleges and Universities**

America's universities are liberal bastions that indoctrinate students to left-wing dogma is an oft-repeated claim by conservative groups, including most recently the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, who issued an executive order in 2019 threatening to pull federal funding from colleges that fail to ensure free speech, and again in July 2020, when pushing public schools and colleges to reopen during the peak of the COVID-19 crisis. Criticism aside, rarely have higher education institutions wavered to embrace surface-level support for social justice and equity. Recent critical discourse analysis theory has provided insight into why universities would be among the first to issue public statements condemning police violence following the death of George Floyd and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. This theory studies the relationship between language and power and focuses on discovering the elements of conflict that lay underneath all sorts of discourse. Within this project's scope, we are looking at the discourse between higher education institutions and the Black community. We suggest that colleges and universities send a strong signal to relevant Communities of Color when they offer a public statement condemning police violence against Black and Brown Americans. However, Communities of Color have endured platitudes in the past from the Academy that conveyed empathy for racial justice. Moreover, colleges and universities as a whole have done little to

implement structural changes that would benefit Students of Color and Faculty of Color on their campuses. Thus, we hypothesize that public statements authored by colleges and universities would contain language that would micro-aggress its intended audience. Accordingly, we predict

- Hypothesis 1: Public statements speaking out against racism and police brutality issued by colleges and universities between May 26 and June 15, 2020 will not include specific ideas to reform the campus structures that maintain inequities.

In early 2020, CBS News reported on America's most liberal colleges.<sup>38</sup> Most of the schools on the report's top-50 list were small-size schools with undergraduate enrollment figures less than 5,000 coeds. Thus, we prefigure that small-size colleges and universities will have the highest mean score per our scoring metric.

- Hypothesis 2: Colleges with enrollment figures with 5,000 students or less are more likely to receive the highest scores for public statements that criticize policing, admit to past practices that failed students of color and students of other historically marginalized groups, and layout a vision for implementing of policy on campus.

According to the same CBS News report of America's most liberal colleges, most schools found on the list are located in the Northeast, including states in the Mid-Atlantic and New England. We use the U.S. Census Bureau's "Census Bureau Regions and Divisions with State FIPS Codes" to determine states found in four geographic regions of the United States (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). Therefore, we posit:

- Hypothesis 3: Statements given by colleges located in the Northeast will score higher than those found in the Midwest, South, and West.

## **Hypotheses: PK-12 Public School Districts**

- Hypothesis 1: In the wake of ongoing protests against institutional racism, school districts have felt pressured to issue public remarks about racial justice and how their schools will create safe spaces for Students of Color once school reopens in August 2020. Because school districts exist as cornerstones to communities across the United States, we expect public school districts from a variety of regions and population densities to issue responses endorsing antiracist pedagogies and display support for students of historically marginalized communities.
- Hypothesis 2: We also trust that most school districts will admit that they have deficiencies in the area of educational equity. Therefore, we calculate that statements by school districts will identify problem areas and convey a vision to take meaningful and unapologetic action to address those inequities.

## Hypotheses: Professional Sports Leagues and Teams

Recent social movements have provided insight into why some professional sports leagues and professional sports teams would offer public statements supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. We believe the racial demographic of a sport's athletes influence teams and leagues to use language in the public statement that expresses genuine empathy with the struggles against anti-Black racism in the United States. For instance, the National Football League (NFL) and National Basketball Association (NBA) are comprised of more than 70% Black and other non-Black Athletes of Color. Major League Soccer (MLS) and the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) have many Black athletes. We envision that many of the individual teams in these leagues will write statements that measure high on our scoring metric. According to ESPN, MLS has one of the highest amounts of Athletes of Color. Professional soccer also has a higher number of Coaches of Color compared to the NFL, which has very little. Thus,

- Hypothesis 1: We believe that professional leagues and professional teams with a majority number of Athletes of Color are more likely to implement structural changes that disrupt racial behavior.
- Hypothesis 2: Leagues such as Major League Rugby (MLR), Major Lacrosse League (MLL), and the National Women's Hockey League (NWHL) are not as popular as the NFL, the NBA, or Major League Baseball (MLB). They do not have many fans or bring in as much revenue as the major sports teams do in the United States. Although the leagues mentioned above have teams across the country, they may not have a pressing duty to follow through on quality statements signaling solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

In general, women endure harsher societal standards than men. Societal hegemony manifests itself in every relation in the world, and especially in sports. Additionally, many of the most famous athletes in women's most popular sports, such as tennis, basketball, and soccer, plus the Olympic games, have been Women of Color. Therefore,

- Hypothesis 3: Due to the intersection of race, gender, and sports, we predict that women's sports will compose strong public statements compared to their male counterparts (Hypothesis 3).

## Hypotheses: Professional Athletes

Our research consists of collecting statements about the Black Lives Matter movement from a variety of professional athletes, including representatives of the NFL, the NBA, the WNBA, the PGA and LPGA, the NHL, MLB, NASCAR drivers, the Association of Tennis Professionals, the Women's Tennis Association, the National Women's Soccer League, Major League Soccer, Olympic and Paralympic athletes, and prizefighters. We also made sure to include proportionate representation of athletes pertaining to race, age, and gender. Our goal is to evaluate the authenticity of public statements expressing support for the BLM movement made by individual athletes. We also examine whether the race, gender, and age of athletes determine the strength of the public statements.

- **Hypothesis 1:** We expect to see young athletes release higher scoring statements.
- **Hypothesis 2:** When it comes to human rights issues in America, the younger generation seems to be more vocal. Therefore, we also expect higher scoring statements from Athletes of Color as opposed to their White counterparts because Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have long endured the macro- and micro- aggressions that the BLM movement protests.
- **Hypothesis 3:** This led us to believe that the highest scoring statements will come from either young Black men or young Black women. But due to the fact that more athletes are male than female, and because there are more male sports, we expect to see higher scoring statements from male athletes compared to their female counterparts.

## **Hypotheses: Corporate America**

We expect that statements by most companies will score low on our grading rubric, thus signifying only fleeting sincerity about anti-Black racism. Businesses have one goal, to maximize profit. If a corporation risks losing profits by releasing a statement voicing support for racial justice, then it will either soften the language or choose not to issue remarks. According, we predict:

- **Hypothesis 1:** An investigation of 58 corporate statements on Black Lives Matter between May 26 and June 15, 2020 will show that large and small businesses will use language that toes a line that avoids driving away White consumers that don't walk arm-in-arm with the protesters and other citizens that sympathize with the meaning underpinning the demonstrations. The issuing of statements lacking substance will occur because it has evolved into a compulsory duty.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Companies that sell products to consumers representing communities of color, women, and liberal and progressive Whites will display courage and boldness in their public statements.

# **Section Two**

## **Detailed Findings**

## **PART I: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – U.S. SENATORS**

### **Scores higher than four were uncommon, regardless of the race, gender, or re-election breakdown by political party**

Of the 100 sitting U.S. Senators, eight chose not to release a statement regarding the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or the events that occurred between March 26 and June 15, 2020. While it may seem promising that 92% of senators made remarks regarding acts of state violence, it becomes apparent when examining the content of the main statements that there is a lack of originality and failure to act on legislation, legislation that results in structural change in government. These idle characteristics serve as a common pattern amongst the words of the senators. For instance, phrases such as, “George Floyd should be alive today,” “The death of George Floyd should have never happened,” and “The death of George Floyd has shaken our nation” were common. Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), along with over 20 other senators, mentioned one or more of those phrases in their statements.<sup>39</sup> A total of 11 senators stated how they planned to take meaningful action to fix policing; a few of those senators filed pieces of legislation to reform policing, which showed promise to implement change. For example, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) proposed legislation to end racial profiling in law enforcement and the criminal justice system, and Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Kamala Harris (D-CA) called for the Justice in Policing Act.<sup>40</sup> The average score of the 92 main statements was 2.7 out of a possible eight points.

Of the 100 U.S. Senators currently serving in office, 53 are Republican, 45 are Democrat, and two are Independent. Of the eight senators who did not release statements, five are up for re-election in 2020. Seven out of the eight senators that remained silent are Republicans.<sup>41</sup> All eight of the senators are White and male. Of the senators that released statements, two are members of the Independent party. Both independent senators, who received scores of 0 and 5, respectively, are White males, neither of whom are up for re-election in 2020. For the 44 Democratic senators who released statements, the average score was 3.3. And for the 46 Republican senators, the average score was 2.1.

Of the 92 senators who released statements, 28% are female and 72% are male. The average score for females, regardless of political party was 2.7. Of the females who released statements, 31% (or eight) are Republican and 69% (or 18) are Democrat. The average score for female Republican senators was 1.9. The average score for female Democrat senators was 3.1. The average score for males, regardless of political party was also 2.7. Of the males who released statements, 3% are Independent, 56% are Republican, and 41% are Democrat. The average score for male Republican senators was 2.2. The average score for male Democrat senators was 3.5.

Out of all the 100 senators, nine are persons of color. Of the nine senators of color, three are Republicans and six are Democrats. The only senator of color up for re-election is Democrat Cory Booker. He was one of only two senators to receive a perfect score of eight. The average score of the seven senators of color was 4.1. When breaking down the race of senators by party, Republican senators received a score of 3.0 while Democratic senators received a score of 4.7. As mentioned, Senator Booker (D-NJ) is one of two senators whose statements received a perfect score. The other senator to earn an eight was Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL). Durbin is a White male up for re-election like Booker. He is also the

senator leading the Democratic Party's policing reform bill, a noteworthy point that helps validate his perfect score.<sup>42</sup>

Of the 33 senators up for re-election, five did not release a statement. All five of the senators up for re-election who remained silent are Republican and male. Of the 28 senators up for re-election who issued statements, 46% are Democrats while 54% are Republicans. The average score for these 28 senators is 2.8. The average score for Democratic senators up for re-election is 3.8. The average score for Republican senators up for re-election is 1.9. When breaking down the senators by gender, six of the 28 senators up for re-election are female. The females only received statement scores of one or two except

for Tina Smith (D-MN) who received a 6.0. The average score for the male senators up for re-election is 2.9.

## **STATEMENT SPOTLIGHT**

### **POLITICS AND SPORTS COLLIDE**

Co-owner of the WNBA's Atlanta Dream and U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler (R-Georgia), who is up for re-election in 2020, criticized the WNBA Players Association's endorsement of the Black Lives Matter movement, which chose to play the 2020 season with "Black Lives Matter," "Say Her Name," and the names of Brianna Taylor and Sandra Bland sewn onto the players' warm-ups and jerseys. Loeffler tweeted on July 9, "we should unite around the American flag. We should keep politics out of sports. We shouldn't promote movements that encourage violence." On Fox News' The Ingraham Angle, she told host Laura Ingraham, "[BLM] wants to abolish the police in five years . . . it is anti-Semitic, it doesn't support the nuclear family." A few days later, Loeffler repeated her statement in an interview with Jack Posobiec of One America News Network. Posobiec has been criticized for making racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic social media postings and is monitored by the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Hatewatch. All 14 players of the Dream released their own statement, saying, "Our team is united in the movement for Black Lives. It is not extreme to demand change after centuries of inequality. This is not a political statement. This is a statement of humanity." The WNBA commissioner Cathy Englebert also released a response to Loeffler's actions: "The WNBA is based on the principle of equal and fair treatment of all people and we, along with the teams and players, will continue to use our platforms to vigorously advocate for social justice."

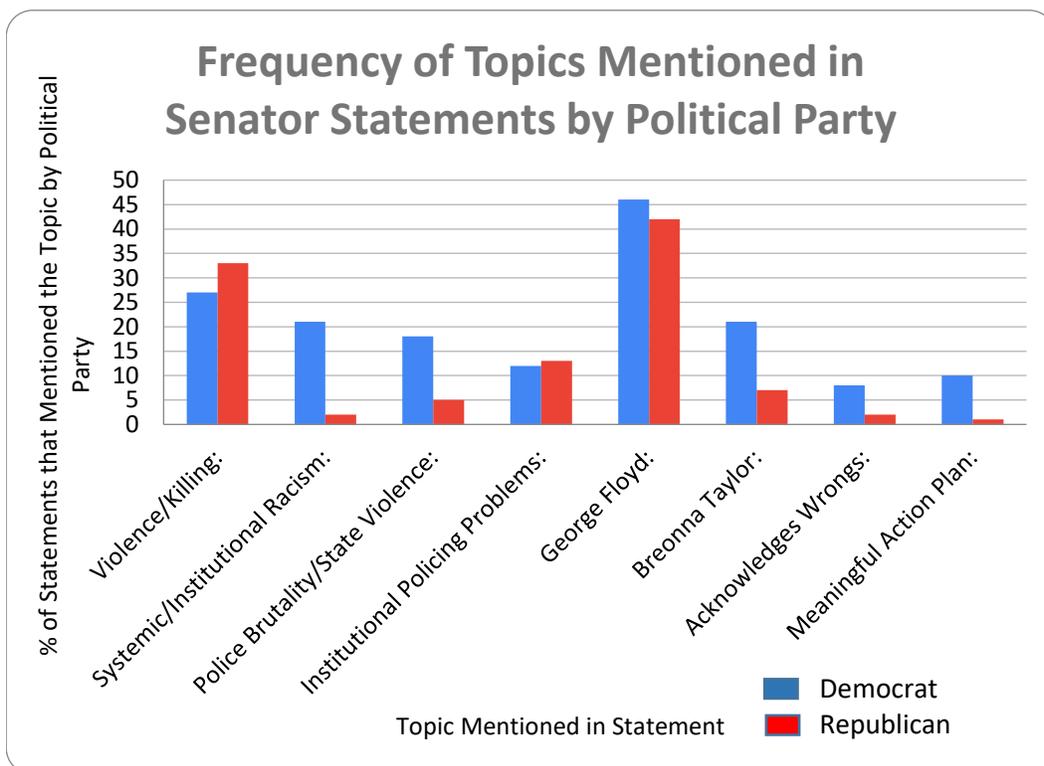
(SOURCES: Kelly Loeffler. "Sports have the power to unite us." Twitter. July 9, 2020; Kelly Loeffler. "I joined @JackPosobiec." Twitter. July 31, 2020; Chris Bengel. "Atlanta Dream players respond to Kelly Loeffler, which objected to WNBA's activism." CBSSPORTS.com. July 10, 2020.

Higher scores such as five, six, seven, or eight were uncommon, indicating that although most senators released statements, most of them failed to incorporate key aspects that would point to a progressive future. Only 14% of senators released statements that received a score of five or higher. Of that 14%, one senator is a Republican and one is an Independent; the rest of the high score-receiving senators are Democrats. Only 14% of senators released statements that received a score of five or higher. Of that 14%, one senator is a Republican and one is an Independent; the rest of the high score-receiving senators are Democrats.<sup>43</sup> Regarding gender, we discovered an even distribution of high scores. Lower range scores of a four or lower were much more common; in fact, two senators received zeros for their statements. Both senators, Angus King (I-ME) and Mike Braun (R-IN), are White males who are not up for re-election this year.<sup>44</sup>

The only group of senators receiving an average score higher than 3.9 or 50% was the small group of senators of color. The highest average score came from Democratic senators of color.<sup>45</sup> This data should not only concern the people but the politicians themselves. Whether from a lack of understanding, empathy, or knowledge, most politicians have failed to properly address, in-depth, current disparities among Americans, including systemic inequality and the over-policing of Black and Brown communities.

## Relatively few statements by U.S. Senators reflect meaningful action against systemic racism

To gauge the strength and effectiveness of the released public statements, we searched for key topics to understand broader themes in senators' remarks about race relations in America. A sizable share of statements focused on the "George Floyd" and



“violence/killing” topics. Addressing either of those two topics was the easiest way for senators to gain points, as two points was the most common score received (30% of all senators received a 2). Eighty-eight percent of statements mentioned George Floyd (46% of those statements were from Democrats and 42% were from Republicans). Sixty percent of statements referenced the violence/killing (27% from Democrats and 33% from Republicans). Republicans mentioned violence/killing to acknowledge the looting and rioting, condemning it more often than mentioning the murders of Floyd or Taylor. Democrats acknowledged violence/killing regarding the violence faced by Black people from law enforcement more frequently than Republicans.

Statements tapping into the more controversial topics, such as acknowledging wrongdoings to People of Color (POC) and how the senator plans to take action, made up a much smaller share of the addressed topics by both political parties. Only 10% of released statements acknowledged personal wrongdoings to POC (8% by Democrats and 2% by Republicans) while 11% of statements explained how the senator plans to take action (10% by Democrats and 1% by Republicans). It is vital to acknowledge past wrongdoings or failures in crafting legislation, otherwise, history will be destined to repeat itself, as it has been. Trying to justify past mistakes creates even bigger, more destructive problems. Failure to own up to the racist culture that is embedded in American society further exposes the disparities that exist

with regards to race in this country. It is a crucial omission that causes many statements to become empty platitudes that cause more frustration among the people the words aimed to comfort.

We also examined statements that mentioned “institutional” or “systemic” racism in the context of Floyd’s death. Statements indicating how deeply rooted racism is in American culture showed the most significant disparity between Democrats and Republicans (21% by Democrats and 2% by Republicans). When posted by Democratic senators, statements tended to include expressions of concern and support for Black Americans while addressing the centuries of oppression they have faced. Only two Republican senators even mentioned the issue, one of them being a Cuban-American.<sup>46</sup> The other statement, from Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT), said, “The death of George Floyd has sparked nationwide conversations... about systemic racism.”<sup>47</sup> Romney earned a point for mentioning the keywords, but did not discuss the topic any further. Most Republican senators are seemingly hesitant to embrace the idea of systemic racism and acknowledge its existence. For example, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) made comments questioning the idea of systemic racism at a Senate Judiciary hearing.<sup>48</sup> Cornyn’s remarks seemed to dismiss the seriousness of the issue at hand. Drawing widespread criticism from his Democratic colleagues, Cornyn continuously refuses to acknowledge the deadly reality of the problem that systemically targets black people. All senators need to understand that the nature of systemic racism is less about the individuals who commit these injustices and more about policing in this country.

As seen in the graph below, Democrats mentioned all of the topics at a greater rate than Republicans, except for the categories of “bad cops” and “violence/killing.” Mentioning “bad cops” was very close (12% by Democrats and 13% by Republicans); however, Republicans are more likely only to criticize the “bad apples” in the police force while Democrats are quick to criticize the institution as a whole. Often, when exposing a law enforcement officer for brutalizing a Black or Brown individual, “it’s just a few bad apples” is a very common response. Senators Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Rick Scott (R-FL) were two of many Republicans who stood up for law enforcement officers and explicitly used the term “bad apples” when discussing the death of Floyd.<sup>49</sup> The problem with that response is that it only addresses a part of the problem, not its root. In fact, the second half of the “bad apples” expression is “a few bad apples *spoil the bunch.*” While bad cops that cause terror contribute to the problem, its root lies in the system that sustains the racist practices and perpetuates the stereotypes and profiling. The system allowed former officer Derek Chauvin to feel comfortable enough to kneel on Floyd’s neck in broad daylight while people were recording him. He had enough faith in the system that he did not think he would lose his job. By using the phrase “bad apples,” the broader issue of prejudiced policing culture is dismissed. It will only be a matter of time until this happens again if that continues to be the response to this police brutality. Returning to George Yancy, who addressed the “bad apples” argument in a *New York Times* column following Floyd’s death, the philosopher states, “If we look at individual police officers divorced from the structure in which they operate — if we simply look for the “bad apples” — we fail to see the role of the police as a whole.”<sup>50</sup> The issue is not whether the individual cop is racist but whether the policing institution is racist. Yancy claims that the answer is yes, the institution as a whole is racist. Like Yancy, Kendi also discussed the “bad apples” argument. While claiming there are “bad apples” in the police force is easy, Kendi contends, “we need to recognize that there’s something wrong with the tree.”<sup>51</sup> The tree in Kendi’s metaphor refers to the systemic racism that is part of the policing system. As two of the leading voices on anti-racism have explained, the “bad apples” metaphor is not a measurable argument if dismantling systemic racism is the ultimate goal. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) was one of only a few senators to concede that the “bad apples” metaphor is disingenuous when reflecting on the deaths of Floyd, Taylor, and Arbery. In his statement, he said, “These lives weren’t stolen by a few racist bad apples; the whole tree has a rot going back 400 years. That racist rot is the reason George Floyd and so many other unarmed Black people are so often killed by police.”<sup>52</sup> Republicans praised/thanked law

enforcement frequently, having more confidence in the police overall, while none of the Democrats did that in their main statements. As mentioned above, when Republicans mentioned violence/killing it was mainly to acknowledge the looting and rebellion while Democrats mentioned it with regards to the violence faced by Black people. In fact, over 50% of Republican statements mentioning violence/killing also referenced the rebellion. Aside from the most frequent topics of violence/killing and George Floyd, the other six topics were mentioned in less than 29% of the U.S. Senators' statements.

**Table 1. Data Analysis – U.S. Senators**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
U.S. Senators	100 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.72 Avg.
Total White	91 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.57 Avg.
Total Senators of Color	9 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.11 Avg.
Total Male	74 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.73 Avg.
Total Female	26 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.76 Avg.
Total Males of Color	5 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.20 Avg.
Total Females of Color	4 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.00 Avg.
Total White Males	69 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.61 Avg.
Total White Females	22 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.45 Avg.
Total Republican	53 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.13 Avg.
Total Democrat	45 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.34 Avg.
Total Independent	2 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.50 Avg.
Total Male Democrats	28 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.48 Avg.
Total Female Democrats	17 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.12 Avg.
Total Male Republicans	44 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.19 Avg.
Total Female Republicans	9 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook,	2.13 Avg.

		Official Websites	
Total White Republicans	50 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.07 Avg.
Total Republicans of Color	3 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.00 Avg.
Total White Democrats	39 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.13 Avg.
Total Democrats of Color	6 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.33 Avg.
Total Up for Re-election	33 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.82 Avg.
Total Males up for Re-election	27 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.91 Avg.
Total Females up for Re-election	6 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.50 Avg.
Total Democrats up for Re-election	12 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.00 Avg.
Total GOP up for Re-election	21 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	1.94 Avg.
Total Male Democrats up for Re-election	10 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	4.10 Avg.
Total Male GOP up for Re-election	17 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	1.92 Avg.
Total Female Democrats up Re-election	2 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	3.50 Avg.
Total Female GOP up for Re-election	4 U.S. Senators in 2020	Twitter, Facebook, Official Websites	2.00 Avg.

## PART II: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – GOVERNORS

### Political Party Affiliation

Among the 50 governors studied, there are currently 26 Republicans and 24 Democrats. By dissecting the data from these two major political parties, it is evident that Democrats released, on average, higher-scoring statements than Republicans. The average score of 26 Republican statements was 1.77 out of 8, with 2 Republicans – Jim Justice of West Virginia and Mark Gordon of Wyoming – not releasing statements.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the average score of 24 Democratic statements was 4.08 out of 8. The average overall score from the 50 governors was 2.88, placing the collective Republican statements below average and the Democratic statements above average. Furthermore, the governor receiving the highest overall score was Steve Sisolak (D-NV), who was the only governor to score an 8 out of 8. Sisolak received the highest possible score of 8 because he was the only governor to cover all aspects of our metric. The governor from Nevada also used specific language to acknowledge his personal faults and the systemic faults of the criminal justice system in America. Governor Sisolak also not only mentioned George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by name, but he also said the names of six other victims of recent police violence in the country.<sup>54</sup> The lowest overall score came from a Republican, Bill Lee (R-TN), who scored a 0 out of 8. Lee used the entirety of his statement to discuss the “violence and vandalism” that occurred in Nashville. Therefore, he filled no aspects of our metric, and he received the lowest possible score of 0 on our scale.<sup>55</sup>

### **STATEMENT SPOTLIGHT**

#### **PRESSURE FROM COLLEGE SPORTS INFLUENCED ONE GOVERNOR’S DECISION TO CHANGE EMBATTLED STATE FLAG**

**On June 30, 2020, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves signed a bill to retire the last U.S. state flag displaying the Confederate battle symbol. This landmark decision followed decades of protests and outside pressure from lawmakers and citizens alike. Following the killing of George Floyd on May 25, protests in Mississippi increased, and the bill was signed nearly one month after Floyd’s death. However, without threats of boycotting from student-athletes and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the bill may have never been signed. On June 19, the NCAA Board of Governors threatened to withhold NCAA championship events from states that allow the Confederate Flag to have a prominent presence. Less than two weeks after this policy was announced, the Mississippi state flag was retired by Governor Reeves.**

Despite an evident correlation between party affiliation and strength of statement, re-election hopes did not appear to affect the governors’ scores. Out of 11 states holding gubernatorial elections in 2020, nine states have governors running for re-election.<sup>56</sup> John Carney Jr. (D-DE) scored a 1, Eric Holcomb (R-IN) scored a 1, Mike Parson (R-MO) scored a 2, Chris Sununu (R-NH) scored a 1, Roy Cooper (D-NC) scored a 4, Doug Burgum (R-ND) scored a 1, Phil Scott (R-VT) scored a 5, Jay Inslee (D-WA) scored a 5, and Jim Justice (R-WV) did not release a statement. The average score among these nine governors was 2.22. Compared to Democrats in this category, Republican governors generally released lower-scoring statements, and it is also worth noting that there is no correlation with the intersecting variables of race and gender because all nine governors are White males.

Along with the correlation between party affiliation and governors’ scores, the specific language of the governors’ statements was also evaluated. Overall, it was determined that 50 statements were too vague to receive a high average score. By including phrases such as “mistakes” or “incidents” instead of “police brutality” or “murder,” for example, the notion of complacency has been perpetuated amongst governmental bodies throughout the country. Of the 50 statements, only five

directly mention the murder of Breonna Taylor. Only 15 directly mention institutional racism. Additionally, only 16 original and follow-up statements included a plan to address future issues of racism. When analyzed by political affiliation, the data showed that Republican governors were more likely to release vague statements than Democrats. Of the 15 governors who directly address institutional racism, just two are Republicans. Similarly, of the 16 governors who included a plan to address future racism, three are Republicans. If more governors from both political parties would have addressed institutional racism and police brutality, many statements would score higher on the scale, and the governors' average score would be raised.

## Evident Support of the President

Of the 50 governors studied, 19 statements on social media exhibit apparent support of President Donald Trump and his policies. Many governors who support Trump on Twitter either thank him for the federal assistance provided to their state, or praise a recent administrative decision he made in office. For example, Tate Reeves (R-MS) tweeted on July 9, 2020, after President Trump approved Mississippi's disaster declaration from severe storms in April: "We are so blessed to have a president that is looking out for our state."<sup>57</sup> Additionally, Governor Jim Justice (R-WV) has thanked Trump on several occasions for his administrative leadership, and he tweeted on July 1, 2020 that he was "proud of [Trump's] work," referring to the implementation of the economic United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.<sup>58</sup> Governor Reeves scored a 2 on the scale, while Governor Justice received a 0 because he did not release a statement. By studying the Twitter pages of the 19 governors who released statements similar to those of Reeve and Justice, a correlation between support for the Trump Administration and low-scoring statements was identified. Of the 19 governors who openly support Trump on social media, 18 are Republicans and 1 is a Democrat. All 18 Republican governors received a score of 3 or lower and John Bel Edwards (D-LA) received a score of 4. The two governors who did not release a statement, Jim Justice from West Virginia and Mark Gordon from Wyoming, are both Republicans who also support Trump. The average score of the 19 governors who support the Administration is 1.63, placing them below the average of 2.88 from all 50 governors.

Because of the high percentage of Republican governors in the South and the notable historical demographic connection between race and region of residence, a correlation between low scores and states with a greater Black resident population was identified. For example, Mississippi is the state with the highest percentage of Black residents (37.8%).<sup>59</sup> Tate Reeves, the governor of Mississippi, is a White, male, Republican who exhibits visible support for Trump on his Twitter page. He received a score of 2, which places him below-average compared to other governors. Louisiana is the state with the second-highest percentage of Black residents (32.7%), and Governor John Bel Edwards is a Democrat and a White male who supports President Trump on Twitter.<sup>60</sup> Governor Edwards received a score of 4 on our scale. Among the states with the 10 highest Black populations, five incumbents exhibit support of the Trump Administration, four of whom are Republicans. Kay Ivey (R-AL) scored a 2, Brian Kemp (R-GA) scored a 1, Tate Reeves (R-MS) scored a 2, and Henry McMaster (R-SC) scored a 1. All four Republican governors who regularly support the President on social media have some of the largest Black populations in the nation and received below-average scores. While this correlation is specific to a select group of governors, the connection between politics and race is noteworthy. The remaining six governors who preside in states with the 10 highest Black populations include Larry Hogan (R-MD) who scored a 4, John Carney Jr. (D-DE) who scored a 1, Roy Cooper (D-NC) who scored a 4, Ralph Northam (D-VA) who scored a 6, and Andrew Cuomo (D-NY) who scored a 5.

As previously discussed, several statements from governors of both major political parties are superficial and unconvincing. Many of these statements are long, but they do not contain the specific content they need to score highly on the scale that was used. For example, Governor Brad Little (R-ID) tweeted, “George Floyd’s death is unacceptable. We can all unite around our demand for justice for this innocent man.” Governor Little then proceeds to thank peaceful protesters and those “who are standing up in peace for a fair and equitable criminal justice system.”<sup>61</sup> While this comment appears to support protesters, it only received a score of 1 on the scale because of its vague language. Governor Little mentions George Floyd and thanks those fighting for a fair system, but he does not provide specific insight or advice on the issue of over-policing Black communities. By steering clear of divisive and concrete language, governors such as Brad Little can sugar-coat problematic social issues maintaining their agendas.

## Patterns in Demographics

Although diversity among the 50 state offices is currently minimal, some patterns exist in the data within gender and race demographics. There is little representation of ethnic minorities in offices across the country, and this contributes to the low scores of several governors’ statements. Presently, there are no Black governors in America. The only Black incumbent whose statement was evaluated is Washington D.C.’s current mayor, Muriel Bowser, who scored a 3 on the scale. We scored Mayor Bowser’s statement on the same scale used to evaluate the other 50 governors. Her statement is included in the demographic section of the data specifically because there are currently no African American governors in America, and Hypothesis 6 references the scores of Governors of Color. Of the total 50 state governors, 47 are White.<sup>62</sup> Of the three remaining governors, Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM) is Latina, David Ige (D-HI) is Asian-American, and Kevin Stitt (R-OK) is Native American.<sup>63</sup> Grisham scored a 3 on the scale, Ige scored a 2 on the scale, and Stitt scored a 1 on the scale. The average score received by these three governors was 2.00 out of 8, and the average score from these governors including Mayor Bowser’s score was 2.25 out of 8. However, because only three Governors of Color and one Black Mayor were studied, there is not enough data to see a strong statistical correlation among their statements.

Along these same lines, there are currently nine female governors and 41 male governors in the United States. Of the nine female governors, six are Democrat and three are Republican. Of the 41 male governors, 18 are Democrat and 23 are Republican. As previously mentioned, Steve Sisolak (D-NV), who is male, received the highest score of 8. The only two scores of 7 were from Kate Brown (D-OR) and Laura Kelly (D-KS), who are both females. The three scores of 0 (two no-statements and one 0) were received by Bill Lee (R-TN), Jim Justice (R-WV), and Mark Gordon (R-WY), who are all males. The average score of the statements from nine female governors was 4.00 out of 8, and the average score of the statements from 41 male governors was 2.63 out of 8. However, because there is a low percentage of female governors in the United States, there are no particularly strong correlations between gender and strength of statement overall.

Currently, there are only three Governors of Color in the nation. This lack of diversity contributes to lower voter turnouts, with more People of Color motivated to vote when Candidates of Color are on the ballot.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, because Black state legislators are more likely to introduce measures to combat racial discrimination and boost Black citizens’ socioeconomic status, a diverse government has a greater chance of acknowledging racial disparities than a majority-White government.<sup>65</sup> With 11 states holding gubernatorial elections in 2020, and all of these states’ current governors being White males, November

elections could be an opportunity for People of Color and women to increase race and gender representation in their state governments.<sup>66</sup> The average score for Governors of Color on our scale was 2.00 out of 8. Although this score is below-average, and lower than White governors' average score of 2.94, diverse representation is important for the future of United States legislation.

**Table 2. Variables in Data Analysis – U.S. Governors**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
U.S. Governors	All 50 U.S. Governors in 2020	50 websites and social media	144 total points 2.88 Avg.
Red State Governors	Governors of 26 states run by Republicans in 2020	26 websites and social media	46 total points 1.77 Avg.
Blue State Governors	Governors of 24 states run by Democrats in 2020	24 websites and social media	98 total points 4.08 Avg.
Governors, White	Total White governors in 2020	47 websites and social media	138 total points 2.94 Avg.
Governors of Color	Total governors of Color in 2020	3 websites and social media	6 total points 2.00 Avg.
Governors, Male	Total male governors in 2020	41 websites and social media	108 total points 2.63 Avg.
Governors, Female	Total female governors in 2020	9 websites and social media	36 total points 4.00 Avg.
Governors, Male, White	Total governors that are White and male in 2020	39 websites and social media	105 total points 2.69 Avg.
Governors, Male, of Color	Total governors that are People of Color and male in 2020	2 websites and social media	3 total points 1.5 Avg.
Governors, Female, White	Total governors that are White and female in 2020	8 websites and social media	33 total points 4.13 Avg.
Governors, Female, of Color	Total governors that are People of Color and female in 2020	1 website and social media	3 total points 3.00 Avg.
Governors Up for Re-election	Total governors up For re-election in 2020	9 websites and social media	20 total points 2.22 Avg.
Republican Governors up for Re-election	Proportion of Republican Govs up for re-election in 2020	6 websites and social media	10 total points 1.67 Avg.
Democratic Governors up for Re-election	Proportion of Democratic Govs up for re-election in 2020	3 websites and social media	10 total points 3.33 Avg.
Governors Up for Re-election, White	Proportion of White Governors up for re-election in 2020	9 websites and social media	20 total points 2.22 Avg.

Governors Up for Re-election, of Color	Proportion of Governors of Color up for re-election in 2020	0 websites and social media	0 total points
Governors Up for Re-election, Male	Proportion of Male Govs up for Re-election in 2020	9 websites and social media	20 total points 2.22 Avg.
Governors Up for Re-election, Female	Proportion of Female Govs up for Re-election in 2020	0 websites and social media	0 total points
Governors in the Northeast Regional diffusion	Proportion of Governors in the Northeast in 2020	9 websites and social media	32 total points 3.56 Avg.
Governors in the South Regional diffusion	Proportion of Governors in the South in 2020	16 websites and social media	37 total points 2.31 Avg.
Governors in the Midwest Regional diffusion	Proportion of Governors in the Midwest in 2020	12 websites and social media	35 total points 2.92 Avg.
Governors in the West Regional diffusion	Proportion of Governors in the West in 2020	13 websites and social media	40 total points 3.08 Avg.
Governors where largest BLM Protests occurred	Governors in MN, WA, CA, IL, NY, AZ, CO, GA, MI, LA, PA, (DC)	11 websites and social media	39 total points 3.55 Avg.
		[including DC]	42 total points 3.50 Avg.

## PART III: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

### Comparing Presidential Statements

Collecting a statements from President Donald Trump and the officials of his Cabinet was considered a priority task for this project. During the gathering process, it was decided to collect statements from all of the living presidents to better measure text, context, and subtext of Trump’s remarks.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, this section compares Trump’s statement about Black Lives Matter to the statements of Barack Obama,<sup>68</sup> George W. Bush,<sup>69</sup> William Jefferson Clinton,<sup>70</sup> and Jimmy Carter.<sup>71</sup> The statements were gathered from various sources and were not always easy to track down. For instance, unlike most public statements collected from social media posts and official websites in this comprehensive survey, President Trump’s statement came from remarks given at the White House Rose Garden. We ascertained the statement by former-President Obama’s statement on his official Twitter account. We discovered statements by Presidents Bush, Clinton, and Carter on their Presidential Library and Museum websites. In keeping with our grading metric, we procured the highest-scoring statements from Presidents Obama and Clinton, who both scored 4 out of 8 points. Presidents Carter and Bush both scored a 3/8, and President Trump scored 2/8. Of these scores, all but President Carter earned a point for addressing George Floyd’s death as a violent killing. All statements but Trump’s earned a point for comments directed at the persistence of institutional or systemic racism. Presidents Carter and Obama were the only two to earn a point for speaking to issues in policing practices. No president earned a point in discrediting the “bad apples” in the police force argument. All statements except for President Carter’s earned a point for mentioning “George Floyd.” No statements mentioned “Breonna Taylor” or acknowledged personal transgressions against Persons of Color or complicit behavior in structural racism. President Carter’s statement is the only one that offered intentional action steps future change to help solve the problems that face historically marginalized groups, though Obama’s nationally televised follow-up statement offered specific details about a meaningful series of solutions for disrupting institutional racism in policing (more on that later).

***Statement by Former President George W. Bush and Former First-Lady Laura Bush***

*“It remains a shocking failure that many African Americans, especially young African American men, are harassed and threatened in their own country. It is a strength when protesters, protected by responsible law enforcement, march for a better future. This tragedy — in a long series of similar tragedies — raises a long overdue question: How do we end systemic racism in our society? The only way to see ourselves in a true light is to listen to the voices of so many who are hurting and grieving. Those who set out to silence those voices do not understand the meaning of America — or how it becomes a better place.” (June 2, 2020)*

There were significant differences among the authored statements by the five living presidents. It was evident by President Trump’s statement on June 1, 2020 that he directed attention toward enforcing order on the protesters, who he would later call “thugs” and “terrorists.”<sup>72</sup> This became visible in the language used to transition between speaking points. For example, President Trump opened his speech with the following statement: “All Americans were rightly sickened and revolted by the brutal death of

George Floyd. My administration is fully committed that, for George and his family, justice will be served.”<sup>73</sup> Yet shortly following his opening remarks, Trump declared, “But we cannot allow the righteous cries and peaceful protesters to be drowned out by an angry mob.”<sup>74</sup> Trump’s near dismissal of the underlying cause of the nation’s unrest explains his low score in accordance with our grading metric. Using the transitional word “but” to switch from the topic of grief to law and order suggests that his focus was less on bringing justice for George Floyd’s death and the other lives lost to police brutality and more towards suppressing dissent on the streets and expressing unconditional support for law enforcement, which eventually won him an unprecedented endorsement from the New York Police Benevolent Association, which represents over 50,000 active and retired NYPD officers. Trump underscored his viewpoint further. After delivering his statement, he had the National Guard forcibly remove protesters from Lafayette Square to secure a photo opportunity at St. John’s Episcopal Church. This act was later condemned by the Commander of the National Guard Adam DeMarco as “an unnecessary escalation of the use of force.”<sup>75</sup>

Looking specifically at President Obama’s statement, one of the highest-scoring among United States Presidents, a difference in tone and intention is evident. President Obama’s public statement addressed matters that so starkly divides the nation. He reminded the public that racial othering of BIPOC “is tragically, painfully, maddeningly ‘normal’.”<sup>76</sup> Altogether, President Obama was more attentive to the historical context surrounding the issues leading up the protests that occurred in the wake of Floyd’s death.<sup>77</sup> His statement spoke directly to systemic issues, and his tone was more empathetic than the authoritarian, order-demanding tenor seen in Trump’s statement. In a nationally televised follow-up statement offered two days after his Twitter statement, Obama noted solutions that he felt would work to decrease the many issues of policing and discrimination. He suggested that local mayors use his Administration’s “My Brother’s Keeper” program, the byproduct of Obama’s 2015 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Task Force Report that created a strategy for implementing best policing practices.<sup>78</sup> While missing some key points on our scoring rubric, Obama’s statement, was unique in that it offered tangible options for solving institutional policing shortcomings.

## **The Presidential Cabinets and Vice President**

Beyond the five living presidents, statements were collected by the current Vice President and the Presidential Cabinet. Of the 22 members of the Presidential Cabinet and the Vice President, just five Cabinet members and the Vice President released statements. From the Cabinet members, the average score was 2.0. The Vice President scored a 2.0 as well. The demographics of those who released statements were as follows: four White males, one African American male, and one Asian American woman. Collectively, five statement authors represent the Republican Party and one is an Independent. The names of those who released statements were: Michael Pence (VP), William Barr (Attorney General), Chad Wolf (Sec. of Homeland Security), Benjamin Carson Sr. (Sec. of HUD), John Ratcliffe (Director of National Intelligence), and Elaine Chao (Dep. Of Transportation). The highest scoring statements scored 3/8 and were from Wolf and Barr. Pence and Chao scored a 2/8. Carson Sr. and Ratcliffe both scored a 1/8. Of the six statements, four sided with the police. These four were Barr, Carson Sr., Wolf, and Pence. Wolf even went as far as denying that systemic racial injustice exists in the criminal justice system. All six statements failed to admit any personal failings on being silent or complicit in systemic racism. None of the statements offered true solutions; rather, the authors opted to note that they would continue working to denounce racism in their profession.

One significant issue commonly seen in the statements from the Executive Branch is that they failed to offer solutions to the problems of anti-Black violence, systemic anti-People of Color racism, and institutional racism in law enforcement. Thus, this cohort’s statements tend to send contradictory messages. For example, in an ABC News interview, Secretary Wolf said, “the outrage that Americans are feeling today about the death of George Floyd is very real [but I don’t] think that we have a systemic racism problem with law enforcement officers across this country.”<sup>79</sup> Trump is among the persons commonly balancing expressions of empathy for the Floyd family while demonstrating little understanding of the context behind the protests. On May 29, Trump tweeted, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” It is a phrase once used by Miami Police Chief Walter Headley in 1967 that defended police brutality in Communities of Color. President Trump’s tweet was later flagged by Twitter as violating rules against propagandizing violence.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, the mediums for the Vice President and cabinet secretaries' statements differed than those of the five living presidents. Barr was the only member of the cabinet to release an official statement. Wolf, Ratcliffe, and Chao all released statements in the forms of interviews. Carson tweeted his statement. Pence’s office released his statement in the form of a communal listening and prayer at a Maryland church. While Twitter is very useful for reaching a large audience, the statements provided via that platform are significantly shorter than official statements and a news talk show interviews. The issue of profundity is evident in the length of Obama’s statement and even more so emphasized in Carson’s statement's brevity; this is intended to highlight just how differently the Cabinet's statements read compared to those of the Presidents. The differences in quality and effectiveness of prepared statements to mediums such as interviews when responding to issues as large as the Black Lives Matter movement are simply too large to ignore.

**Table 3. Variables in Data Analysis – President of the United States and the Cabinet of the United States**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
Executive Branch of the US Gov’t	All members of the Cabinet, POTUS, and Vice Pres. in 2020	7 websites, interviews and social media	14 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
President of the United States	Donald J. Trump	1 websites, interviews and social media	2 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
Vice President of the United States	Mike Pence	1 websites, interviews and social media	2 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
All Cabinet Members	All members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	5 websites, interviews and social media	10 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
Executive Branch, White	All White members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	3 websites, interviews and social media	7 Total Points 2.3 Avg.
Executive Branch Members of Color	All members of color in the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	2 websites, interviews and social media	3 Total Points 1.3 Avg.
Executive Branch, Male	All male members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	4 websites, interviews and social media	8 Total Points 2.0 Avg.

Executive Branch, Female	All female members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	1 websites, interviews and social media	2 Total Points 2.0 Ave
Executive Branch, White Males	All White and male members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	3 websites, interviews and social media	7 Total Points 2.3 Avg.
Executive Branch, Males of Color	All male members of color in the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	1 websites, interviews and social media	1 Total Point 1.0 Avg.
Executive Branch, White Females	All White and female members of the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	0 websites, interviews and social media	0 Total Points 0 Avg.
Executive Branch, Females of Color	All female members of color in the Presidential Cabinet in 2020	1 websites, interviews and social media	2 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
Republican Cabinet Members	All members of the Presidential Cabinet that are registered Republicans in 2020	5 websites, interviews and social media	10 Total Points 2.0 Avg.
Democratic Cabinet Members	All members of the Presidential Cabinet that are registered	0 websites, interviews and social media	0 Total Points 0 Avg.

## PART IV: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Initially, public statements from higher education institutions were gathered in the area of Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) in preparation for a panel discussion about the state of education that was to be held on the evening of June 5, 2020. The initial statements collected were from institutions such as American University, Georgetown University, Howard University, George Mason University, George Washington University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Virginia. Discussion about the statements on the panel evolved into a reflective discussion about what People of Color expect from the individuals and institutions issuing such public remarks. The search expanded as a result of that discourse to evaluating statements from 25 colleges and universities in each of the country's four regions, totaling 100 statements. Interestingly, 192 statements were collected, including 45 from the Northeast, 40 from the Midwest, 69 from the South, and 38 from the West. Readers can consider that several online media publications ran articles about the authenticity of public statements as we were doing this research. While many of the arguments presented in those online columns align with our results, we consider our work the only study that took the time to collect almost 200 public statements from colleges and graded them per a scoring metric that measured the boldness, self-reflection, and vision of said colleges.

Statements received one point per row. High scoring statements were considered to be those that received scores between 6 and 8. Medium scoring statements obtained scores from 3 to 6. Scores of 0 to 2 were low scoring statements.

As mentioned, public statements about Black Lives Matter were retrieved from 192 large, medium-sized, and small-sized colleges and universities. The statements were discovered first by looking at social media posts, namely Twitter and Facebook. Official websites were also sourced to locate a statement on the college's homepage. Of the 192 colleges and universities, 21 statements (11%) received a score of 1-point. Twenty-nine colleges (15%) scored 2 points. There were 37 colleges (19%) with statements that received a score of 3. Twenty-one colleges (11%) earned scores of 4 points. Thirty-eight colleges (20%) scored 5 points. Nine colleges (5%) received a 6. There are seven colleges (4%) receiving a score of 7. We could not identify statements from 20 colleges, which were given a score of zero. Another 10 colleges attained zero points for poorly constructed statements. No college or university received a perfect score of 8 out of 8. The mean score for all 192 Black Lives Matter statements issued by colleges and universities was 2.95.

Our textual analysis of these public statements reveals that most allow Whiteness to flourish; proof that many educators are unable to see how their chosen words stroke the emotionality of Whites while saying nothing to alleviate the racial pain endured by the people each statement intends to comfort. For instance, in one breath, President of the University of Virginia, Jim Ryan, wrote, “[Floyd’s] death disturbs, offends, and saddens” him “deeply.” However, just a few lines later, he offered a claim signifying a misinterpretation of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, saying he condemns the protests: “we know that violent protests both backfire and often injure those who are already victims.”<sup>81</sup> Other statements use well-meaning yet elusive passages such as “we must live our commitment to justice, inclusion and humanity,”<sup>82</sup> “stand up against hatred, intolerance, and racism,”<sup>83</sup> “we are

committed to building an inclusive environment,”<sup>84</sup> and “we can . . . creat[e] the America we must insist belongs to us all.”<sup>85</sup> While righteous, these passages are hollow when missing from the statements are apologies for past wrongdoings and without issuing plans for concrete changes to campus culture and policy.

Specifics to both institutional transgressions and a call for substantive changes only occasionally appear in the public statements by colleges and universities. For example, before laying out a plan to reform policy on campus, Arizona State University President Michael M. Crow conceded, “we have been too slow in the concept of redesigning, reconceptualizing, restaffing, re-empowering and enabling [Arizona State] to design, create, staff, and assess [inequality on campus].”<sup>86</sup> Haverford College President Wendy Raymond decried her institution’s failure to take proactive measures to change the culture of inclusion. While not a perfect statement, she challenged the college’s White faculty and students “to grow our intellectual, social, and emotional intelligence about racism . . . to take responsibility for doing this work.”<sup>87</sup> Sean Decatur, President at Kenyon College, laid out three “suggestions on actions” in his statement, which included tips for students on how to safely protest, a reading list for self-education about “the deep history and legacy of violence against the Black community,” and tips for how to lend support to those in need.<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, ambiguity by 192 colleges and universities to issue public statements that specifically address police brutality, systemic attacks on Black lives, and institutional shortcomings, while also failing to acknowledge the impact of anti-Black racism on present-day racial disparities at their institutions underscores an implicit nature of their omission. Colleges and universities must commit to the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus.

## Medium-sized colleges and universities attained the highest mean score

Our researchers first divided up the 192 colleges and universities by enrollment size then classified the schools as either “small,” “medium,” or “large” according to the standards provided by CollegeData.com, which were

## **STATEMENT** **SPOTLIGHT**

### Bronx Zoo Accepts Responsibility for Racist Behavior and Takes Action

Over the course of three days in September 1906, the New York Zoological Society in the Bronx exhibited Ota Benga, a 23-year-old man from the Congo inside an iron monkey enclosure with chimpanzees and an orangutan. The zoo displayed Benga as the “little black man” and “African pigmy tree man” impossible to tame. On July 29, 2020, the zoo’s Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) issued a statement apologizing for displaying Benga at the Bronx Zoo. On March 20, 1916, while living in Lynchburg, Virginia, Benga died by suicide. The WCS conceded its wrongdoing without any qualification. WCS President and CEO Cristián Samper wrote: “We deeply regret that many people and generations have been hurt by these action . . . We recognize that overt and systemic racism persists, and our institution must play a greater role to confront it.” Samper recognized that his organization stayed silent on its connection to eugenicists Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn, Sr. As a result, Samper announced that WCS is opening all of its records and archives related to Benga to the public. The organization also announced it is hiring a strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion officer.

verified by several other sources.<sup>89</sup> Large schools encompassed undergraduate enrollment at more than 15,000 students. Medium-size schools possess enrollment figures between 5,000 and 14,999 coeds. Small colleges have less than 4,900 students.

Overall, large schools' public statements accumulated a mean score of 2.92. Thirteen large schools, including the University of Houston and West Virginia University received scores of 1 out of 8. Seventeen colleges each received 2 points, including Liberty University with more than 100,000 undergraduates. Seventeen large colleges received a score of 3, while 13 earned 4 points. Twenty-one received 5 points out of 8 points. One large college in our study, University of Pittsburgh, received 6 points. The University of Michigan, Washington State University, and Oregon State University each earned the score of 7 out of 8 points.

On the contrary, statements from the 49 medium-size schools accumulated a mean score of 2.98. This score is the highest average of the three distinct college sizes, thus disproving one of our hypotheses that small schools would obtain the largest mean score. Eleven medium-size colleges did not earn a point for their statements, while five received one point. Six medium-size colleges earned 2s, 12 earned 3s, six earned 4s, 10 earned 5s, and two colleges, American University and Xavier University, each earned 6 points. The statement by one medium-size school, Brown University, earned 7 points out of 8 points.

Statements from 45 small colleges amassed a mean score of 2.93. Of the small colleges evaluated, 12 earned zero points. Three colleges, Austin College, California Institute of Technology, and the University of Tulsa, each scored 1 point. Our investigators awarded a score of 2 to four small colleges. Among the remaining small colleges, eight received 3 points, two earned 4 points, seven earned 5 points, six attained 6 points, and three achieved scores of 7 points out of 8 points.

### **Colleges and universities in the American Northeast achieved the highest mean score, although their scores are nothing to write home about**

There was not a significant difference in public statements when researchers divided schools by region. Utilizing U.S. Census Bureau designations for states in the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West, our researchers discovered that colleges and

## **STATEMENT SPOTLIGHT**

### **SMALL COLLEGE SHOWS ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENTS CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR CHANGE**

The administration at Dickinson College, a private liberal arts college in Carlisle, Pennsylvania with enrollment at about 2,200 students, including a student population that is 22% Students of Color and 13% International, spent the summer after the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in dialogue with the college's Black Student Union. The students and college administration reached an agreement to create a more inclusive and "safer community for everyone." The agreement includes provisions to disarm campus police and to create a larger public safety board comprised of Dickinson students, campus officers, and the local police department. The college also announced an end to its anti-boycott policy against corporations and organizations that maintain values that conflict with the college's mission.

SOURCE: George Stroud, VP for Student Life and Dean of Students, and Keshawn Bostic, '21, President, Black Student Union.

universities in the Northeast accumulated the highest mean average (3.6) for Black Lives Matter statements, thus matching our hypothesis. The 45 colleges evaluated from the Northeast earned a total of 162 points and a mean score of 3.6. In the Midwest, 40 colleges and universities earned 122 total points and a mean score of 3.05, the third-highest of the four regions of the United States. With a mean score of 3.45, the 38 colleges and universities in the West earned 131 total point. Finally, statements issued by 69 colleges and universities in the South earned 176 total points and a mean score of 2.55.

When broken down by region, colleges and universities in the Northeast (3.6), Midwest (3.05), and West (3.45) performed higher than the mean average of every college (2.95) taken together. The South, with a mean score of 2.55, did not match or exceed every college's mean average. Proportionately, colleges and universities in the Northeast scored better on medium-scoring points—3s (12 colleges for 24 points), 4s (six colleges for 24 points), 5s (eight colleges for 40 points), and 6s (five colleges for 30 points)—thus enabling this regional group to accrue a mean score higher than the other regions.

**Table 4. Variables in Data Analysis – Colleges/Universities**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
Colleges/Universities	Colleges/Universities in 2020	192 college websites and social media	567 total points 2.95 Avg.
Large Colleges (+15,000 enrollment)	Colleges/Universities +15,000 enrollment in 2020	98 college websites and social media	286 total points 2.92 Avg.
Medium-Sized Colleges (5,000-14,999 enrollment)	Colleges/Universities 5,000-14,999 enrollment in 2020	49 college websites and social media	146 total points 2.98 Avg.
Small-Sized Colleges (-4,999 enrollment)	Colleges/Universities -4,900 enrollment in 2020	45 college websites and social media	132 total points 2.93 Avg.
Northeast Regional diffusion	The proportion of institutions in the Northeast in 2020	45 college websites and social media	162 total points 3.60 Avg.
Midwest Regional diffusion	The proportion of institutions in the Midwest in 2020	40 college websites and social media	122 total points 3.05 Avg.
South Regional diffusion	The proportion of institutions in the South in 2020	69 college websites and social media	176 total points 2.55 Avg.
West Regional diffusion	The proportion of institutions in the West in 2020	38 college websites and social media	131 total points 3.45 Avg.

## PART V: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – PK-12 School Districts

Public statements about the George Floyd murder, institutional racism, and Black Lives Matter from 144 public school districts across the United States were evaluated. According to the grading metric (pages 20-21), statements issued by the school districts obtained a mean score of 1.56. Of the 144 public school districts in our research, 50 represented urban districts, 43 suburban districts, and 51 rural districts. We found that 100% of the urban districts released a statement, while just 30% of suburban districts and 6% of rural districts issued statements. This pattern shows that less area density correlates with a drop in response level in public school districts. Statements authored by urban school districts scored moderately (3.42) while suburban districts (1.02) and rural districts (.25) received low grades.

The investigation also analyzed schools by geographic region. The regional breakdown the 144 public school districts in this survey: 33 Midwest, 33 Northeast, 33 South, and 45 West. When the survey is analyzed in this fashion, the mean scores become more similar to one another. Statements issued by public school districts in the Midwest scored 2.03. Those from the Northeast obtained 1.21. Schools in the South earned 1.27. Schools in the West earned a mean score of 1.82.

### Few Statements Recognize Patterns of Over-Policing Black Communities

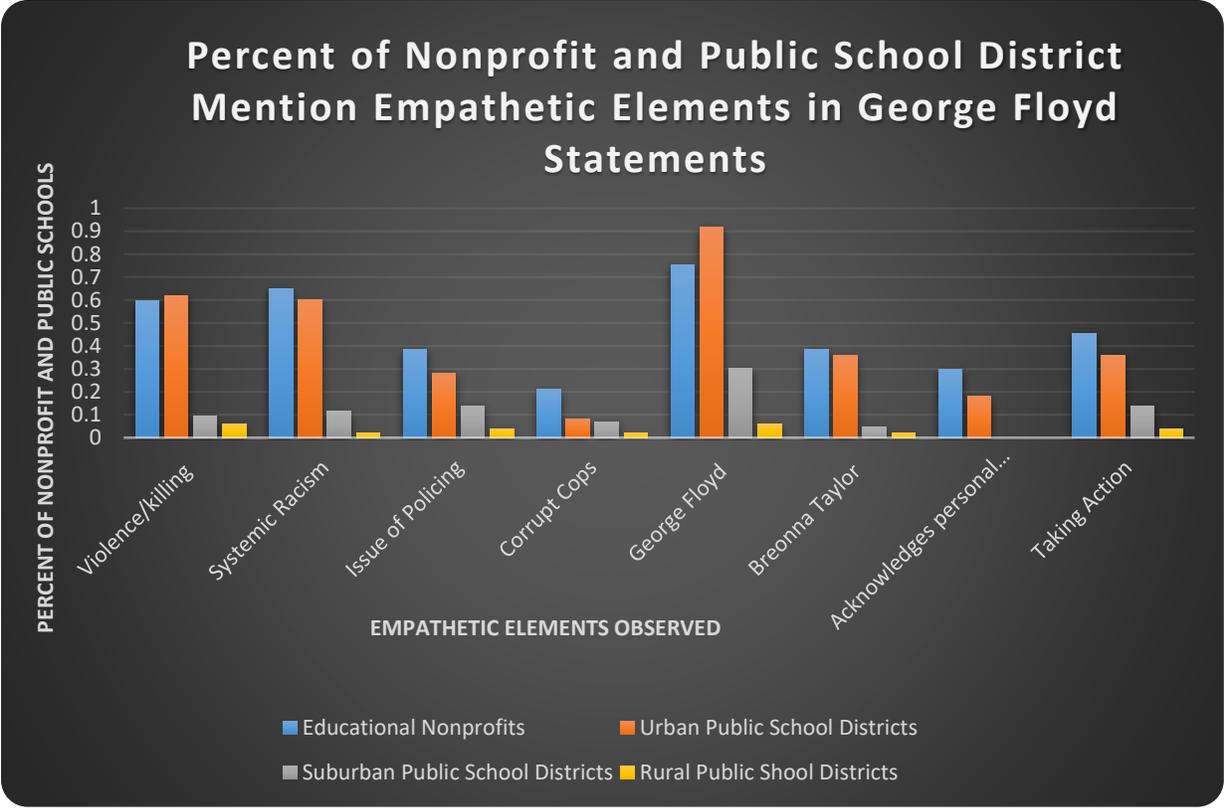
- While the majority of the 144 statements by PK-12 school districts mention George Floyd’s murder, they do not acknowledge a history and pattern behind police brutality. With only 23% of PK-12 public school district statements recognizing the history of police brutality cases, the statements appear as nothing more than symbolic gestures that feign support for the BLM movement.
- In authoring statements, many public school districts did not mention police killings against People of Color, namely African American males, except for George Floyd. In fact, 92% of urban districts, 30% of suburban districts, and less than 1% of rural districts mentioned Floyd by name. Similarly, 36% of urban school districts, 5% of suburban school districts, and 2% of rural school districts mentioned Breonna Taylor or other police killings victims.

### Few Statements from School Districts Endorsed Police Reform

- Review of the 144 public statements found that school districts avoided fully endorsing policy changes espoused by Black Lives Matter: 72% of urban school districts did not comment on police reform policy while just 8% criticized policing directly. For suburban school districts, only 14% mentioned police brutality and 7% addressed policing reform. We conferred the lowest score to rural school districts. Just 4% of rural districts said something about police brutality while 2% endorsed reforms to law enforcement.<sup>90</sup>

#### SURVEY ASSESSMENT

Widespread protests in the wake of George Floyd’s death provided educators with an opportunity to address systemic issues that link school districts to the prison industrial complex; and yet, very few school districts wrote statements eluding to dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

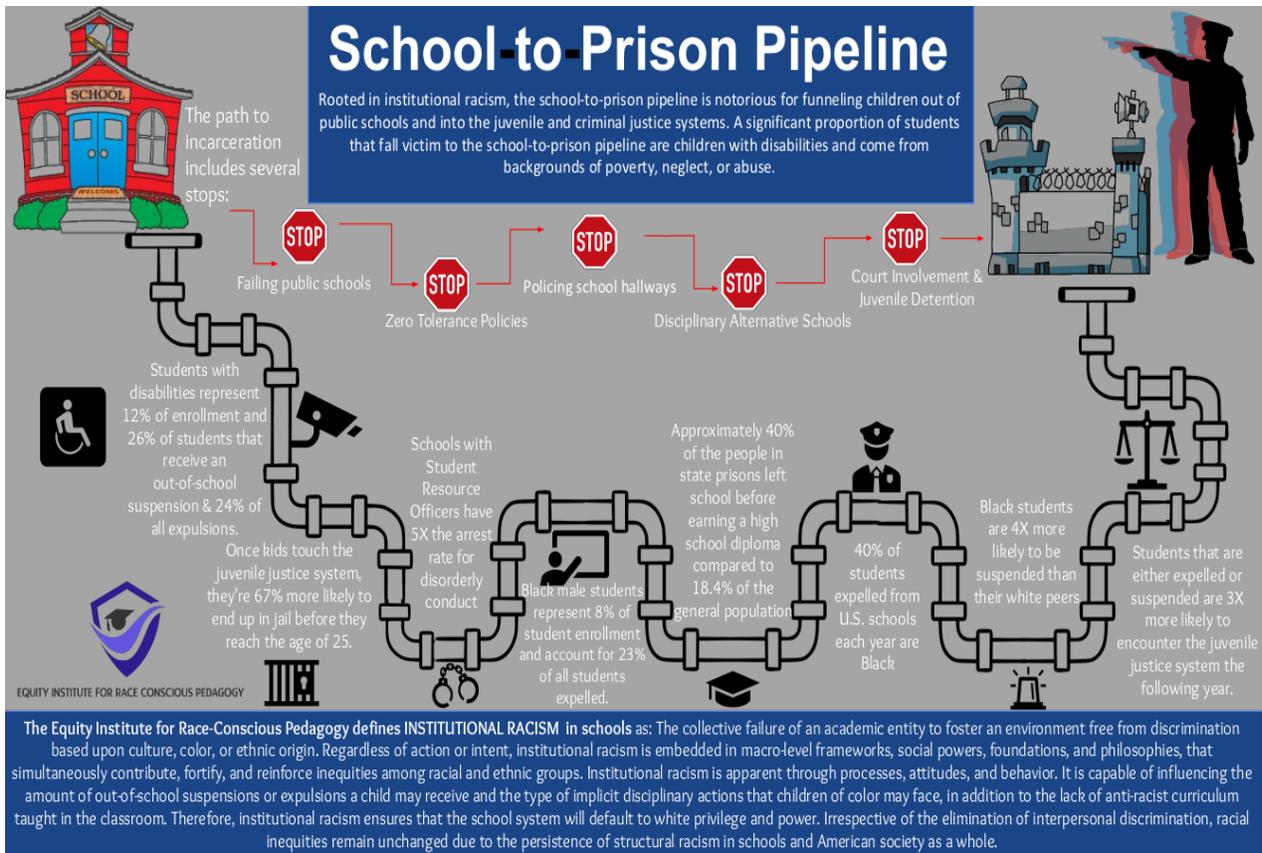


### Few Statements Admit to Racial Shortcomings and Few Articulate Meaningful Action Steps to Reform Disciplinary Practices in School Districts

- Of the 144 PK-12 school districts analyzed, 36% of urban, 14% of suburban, and 4% of rural districts announced plans to reform school disciplinary policies to disrupt the school-to-prison-pipeline. Although the vast majority of school districts did not offer details, more urban school districts pronounced school reform plans compared to suburban and rural school districts.

**Table 5. Variables in Data Analysis - PK-12 Public School Districts**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
PK-12 Public School District	PK-12 Public Schools in 2020	144 websites and social media	231 total points 160 Avg.
PK-12 Rural School Districts	PK-12 Public Schools in rural areas	51 websites and social media	13 total points 0.25 Avg.
PK-12 Suburban School Districts	PK-12 Public Schools in suburban areas	43 websites and social media	49 total points 1.02 Avg.
PK-12 Urban School Districts	PK-12 Public Schools in urban areas	50 websites and social media	169 total points 3.42 Avg.
Midwest Regional diffusion	The proportion of Public Schools in the Midwest in 2020	33 school district websites & social media	67 total points 2.03 Avg.
Northeast Regional diffusion	The proportion of Public Schools in the Northeast in 2020	33 school district websites & social media	40 total points 1.21 Avg.
South Regional diffusion	The proportion of Public Schools in the South in 2020	33 school district websites & social media	42 total points 1.27 Avg.
West Regional diffusion	The proportion of Public Schools in the West in 2020	45 school district websites & social media	82 total points 1.82 Avg.



## **PART VI: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – PROFESSIONAL SPORTS LEAGUES AND TEAMS**

### **Higher Percentage of Black Athletes Equals Quality Statements**

Since the dismantling of the Jim Crow system in the 1960s, America's major sports leagues have witnessed changes to the diversity among its players. The NFL and NBA, in particular, are dominated by Black athletes. Relatively speaking, Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer have significantly grown browner in recent decades, though the decrease in the number of African American players in MLB since 2010 is noticeable. According to a report issued by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, People of Color make up almost 43% of MLB players, most of whom are Latino. Comparably, 81.9% of the players in the NBA and just over 70% of the players in the NFL are Persons of Color.<sup>91</sup> With these figures in mind, we found a correlation between the percentage of Black and Brown athletes in sports leagues and the overall quality of public statements coming from individual teams. As noted earlier, the NBA has the highest percentage of Black players than any other sports league in the United States. The NBA's league statement about the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement scored higher than most at 5 points, while the average of the individual teams' statements was 2.88. That was the highest point average out of the 10 leagues surveyed for this study. The WNBA also has a high percentage of Athletes of Color. According to ESPN, the WNBA maintains an A-plus for its racial diversity and an A for its gender diversity. This is a stark contrast from many other sports that do not rank as high. League president Lisa Borders is Black and many league coaches and general managers are also Persons of Color. The overall league has a high percentage of Black and other non-Black People of Color at almost 70%.<sup>92</sup> Surprisingly, the WNBA's statement scored a 3 points per our metric and the average of the 12 individual teams was 2.5. And yet, the WNBA implemented tangible action steps to show unity with People of Color in general, including the decision to allow its players to wear the names of Breonna Taylor and Sandra Bland on their uniforms. Additionally, during WNBA games, players wear Black Lives Matter warm-ups and have opted to paint the BLM slogan at the IMG academy where teams play. Though there is pushback by some such as U.S. Senator Kelly Loeffler, who is co-owner of Atlanta Dream, the WNBA has been supportive of the players' actions to combat racism. Similarly, the NFL has a very high percentage of Black players. The NFL's overall statement scored 7 out of 8 points on our metric, the highest among every professional league surveyed. Its 32 individual teams' statements average was 2.19 out of 8 possible points.

On the other hand, leagues with a small number of Black athletes saw low scoring statements, if any statement was given at all. For example, although NASCAR's overall league statement scored 3 points, just three of 19 NASCAR teams inside the league issued public remarks about Black Lives Matter. That said, NASCAR was among the first professional sport organizations to take radical steps responding to the death of George Floyd when it banned the Confederate flag at its sporting events.

Major League Baseball's statement earned a score of 5 out of 8 points, thus falling in the middle of the leagues we surveyed. The teams inside MLB, however, did a poor job writing public statements. Statements by the 30 MLB teams averaged 1.63 points. Only one MLB team, the Tampa Bay Rays with a score of 6/8, scored higher than 4 points.

Major League Lacrosse also scored poorly. The overall league issued a statement, but it scored only 1 point. Out of the 6 teams in the league, only one issued a statement and it scored a 0. It is worth noting that MLL has just four Black players in its 150-player league. That's just about 2.7% of league players.

**Table 6. Variables in Data Analysis – Professional Sports Leagues and Professional Teams**

Concept	Measure	Source	Mean Score
Professional Sports Leagues	All Professional Sports Leagues In 2020	11 league websites and social media	31 total points 2.81 Avg
Major League Baseball	All teams in MLB in 2020	30 team websites and social media	49 total points 1.63 Avg
Major League Soccer	All teams in MLS in 2020	26 team websites and social media	32 total points 1.23 Avg
NASCAR	All teams in NASCAR in 2020	19 team websites and social media	6 total points 0.32 Avg
National Basketball Association (NBA)	All teams in the NBA in 2020	29 team websites and social media	75 total points 2.88 Avg
National Football League (NFL)	All teams in the NFL in 2020	32 team websites and social media	70 total points 2.19 Avg
National Hockey League (NHL)	All teams in the NHL In 2020	31 teams websites and social media	44 total points 1.42 Avg.
Major Lacrosse League (MLL)	All teams in the NLL in 2020	6 team websites and social media	0 total points 0.00 Avg
Women’s National Basketball Assoc. (WNBA)	All teams in the WNBA in 2020	12 team websites and social media	30 total points 2.50 Avg
National Women’s Soccer League	All teams in the NWSL in 2020	9 team websites and social media	23 total points 2.56 Avg
Major League Rugby	All teams in MLR in 2020	10 team websites and social media	3 total points 0.30 Avg
National Women’s Hockey League	All teams in the NWHL in 2020	5 team websites and social media	0 total points 0.00 Avg

## PART VII: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS - PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

### Gender Representation and Patterns in Public Statements by Professional Athletes

A common intricacy seen in the sports world when it comes to politics is gender. With issues ranging from wage gaps to BLM support, there are moments when the media disproportionately covers men's and women's sports. Male athletes overwhelmingly appear on the cover of sports magazines, namely *Sports Illustrated*, *Tennis*, and *Golf Digest*, and documentary films commonly feature male athletes or male teams. Televised coverage is equally one-sided. For instance, during Covid-19 lock-in-place orders, the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) commenced its return-to-play tournament, the Challenge Cup, featuring all nine league teams competing in Salt Lake City, on June 27, 2020. The media rarely covered the games. However, when Major League Soccer return-to-play on July 8, sports shows like ESPN's *Sportscenter* made it the most talked-about sports action in the United States for weeks leading up to the first MLS game. During the research for BLM-related public statements following the death of George Floyd, we learned that female athletes are more likely to release strong testimonies against institutional racism and violent policing when compared to their male counterparts. Of the 79 athletes researched, 22 (28%) were female and 57 (72%) were male. When considering the athletes that scored a 4 or greater, 30% were female and 70% were male. Only 9% of statements given by male athletes received a score of 4 or better, while 14% of statements written by female athletes earned a score of 4 or better. For example, Venus Williams, seven-time winner of Grand Slam singles titles, scored a 4 on the scale. Her statement about BLM included the sentence "I am deeply saddened that it has taken multiple acts of police brutality to make people painfully aware of the racism that still pervades America."<sup>93</sup> Even though she released a statement we consider strong, Williams failed to score higher due to the omission of words and phrases, such as calling the police officers involved in Floyd's death "corrupt," which tend to pacify public sensitivities. She did include the terms 'violence/killing,' institutional racism, police brutality, and the actions she plans on taking to combat racism in America. An example of a male subject's statement receiving a high score is ex-NBA player and current co-host of ESPN's *Get Up!* and ESPN Radio's *Jalen & Jacoby*, Jalen Rose. Rose earned 6 points out of 8 points. Affirming that Black athletes have "been trying to tell the world forever," about structural and institutional injustices that lead to the behavior that killed Floyd, Rose included specific remarks about the killing of George Floyd, institutional racism, police brutality, and the actions he plans on taking to combat racism in his statement.<sup>94</sup>

Another way to examine the statements between female and male players is by the sport. Of the three female athletes that scored a 4 or better using our metric, two were from the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), and one was a United States tennis player. Of the seven male athletes that earned a 4 or better using the metric, two were from the NFL, one was a commentator, one was a coach, two were from the NBA, and one was a Paralympic athlete.

## The Relevance of an Athlete’s Age When Crafting a Public Statement

Another important factor to focus on when looking at the statements regarding the BLM movement is the age of the professional athletes. The average age of all 79 athletes researched in this study was 37. The average age of the 57 male athletes researched was 40 and the average age of the 22 female athletes researched was 31. Since veteran status ranges differently per sport, it was difficult to categorize athletes by age. We also wanted to include retired athletes in our study. Therefore, one of the most important approaches to our research is to label current and retired professional athletes in the age range of 15-39 as *young* while calling *veterans* those age 40 and older. This age bracket is used because the average age of retirement for an athlete is 33 years old, which suggests 40-year-old athletes are considered veterans.<sup>95</sup> During the research process, we concluded that the veteran athletes were more likely to release a strong statement scoring a 4 or higher compared to their younger athlete counterparts. Of the 79 athletes researched, 51 (65%) were young and 28 (35%) were veteran. When considering the athletes who scored a 4 or above, 40% were young, and 60% were veterans. Of the athletes assessed, 8% of young athletes scored a 4 or greater while 21% of veteran athletes scored a 4 or above. For example, Michael Jordan, 57, six-time NBA champion with the Chicago Bulls, earned the score of 4 per our rubric. Jordan wrote, “We must listen to each other, show compassion and empathy and never turn our backs on senseless brutality.”<sup>96</sup> While a quality message, Jordan’s statement spoke vaguely about institutional racism and expressed commiseration for George Floyd’s death while saying nothing direct about law enforcement or police reform. An example of a young athlete scoring higher on the scale is Kansas City Chief quarterback, Patrick Mahomes. Mahomes, 24, scored a 6 on the scale because his statement chided the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, police brutality, and the effects of institutional racism. Age can also be considered when looking at the kind of sport the high scoring athletes play. Of the four young athletes that scored a 4 or above, one was in the NFL, one was in the NBA, one was a Paralympic athlete, and one was in the NWSL. Of the six veteran athletes that scored a 4 or above, one was in the NFL, one was a commentator, one was a coach, one was in the NBA, one was a tennis player, and one was in the NWSL.

### STATEMENT SPOTLIGHT

#### **MICHAEL JORDAN IS DONATING \$100 MILLION OVER 10 YEARS TO ORGANIZATIONS FIGHTING AGAINST SYSTEMIC RACISM**

**On June 5, 2020, Michael Jordan and the Jordan Brand announced in a statement that it was donating \$100 million over 10 years to aid the fight against systemic racism. In the statement, and a subsequent press release, the Jordan Brand described three priority areas: social justice, economic justice, and education and awareness of racism. “We understand that one of the main ways we can change systemic racism is at the polls. We know it will take time for us to create the change we want to see, but we are working quickly to take action for the Black community’s voice to be heard.” At the time of this publication, Jordan and his company had already donated \$1 million each to the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., and the Formerly Incarcerated & Convicted People and Families Movement. The Black Voters Matter campaign received another \$500,000.**

## Race Determines Quality of Athletes' Statements

A final factor that is crucial when considering human rights protests like the BLM movement is the race of the professional athlete issuing public statements. Our research determines that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) athletes are more likely than White athletes to release high scoring statements. Of the 79 athletes assessed, 47 (60%) were White and 32 (40%) were Black and other non-Black People of Color. When considering the athletes that scored a 4 or higher, 40% were White and 60% were Black. For example, Dartanyon Crockett, a Paralympic Judo athlete, received a 4 on the assessment, while Drew Brees, quarterback of the NFL's New Orleans Saints, scored a 1 before obliged to issue a second statement that we graded a 5, but only after enduring social media fallout for criticizing the take-a-knee protest during the playing of the National Anthem. Crockett's strong statement included a three-minute video with a personal narrative explaining why he and his wife feel threatened while living in their predominantly White neighborhood.<sup>97</sup> Crockett spoke to institutional racism and the problem of corrupt policing in America. In contrast, Brees, who is considered a veteran athlete at age 41, said to Daniel Roberts of Yahoo Finance on June 3, "I will never agree with anybody disrespecting the flag of the United States of America or our country." Coming almost two weeks after Floyd's death and the subsequent protests that compelled others in the National Football League, like San Diego Chargers head coach Anthony Lynn, to admit that most White Americans like Brees gravely misinterpret the purpose of Colin Kaepernick's take-a-knee protest. Lynn said to the *Los Angeles Times*:

People talked about disrespecting the flag . . . the flag covers a lot – patriotism and civil rights and other things. And Colin was speaking out against injustice and a lot of people didn't catch on to that because it was happening during the national anthem. They thought it was disrespectful to the flag.<sup>98</sup>

The firestorm and potential fracture of team chemistry on the New Orleans Saints forced a second statement from Brees, who then said, "I [now] stand with the Black community in the fight against systemic racial injustice and police brutality and support the creation of real policy change that will make a difference."<sup>99</sup> Brees's retraction received condemnation from the President of the United States, Donald Trump on Twitter.<sup>100</sup> Of the 32 Athletes of Color evaluated, their mean score was 1.5 and of the 47 White athletes evaluated, their mean score was 1.1. Of the 30 White, male athletes evaluated, their mean score was 1.2. Of the 27 Black, male athletes evaluated, their mean score was 1.6. Of the 17 White, female athletes evaluated, their mean score was 1. Of the five Black, female athletes evaluated, their mean score was also 1. Again, the ages of the athletes can also be analyzed using the sports they play. Of the six Black athletes that received a 4 or above, one was from the NFL, one was a commentator, two were from the NBA, one was a Paralympic athlete, and one was a tennis player. Of the four white athletes that scored a 4 or above, one was from the NFL, one was a coach, and two were from the NWSL.

## PART VIII: DISCUSSION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS – CORPORATE AMERICA

### Corporate Misunderstanding of the Gravity of Racial Injustice Causes Inconsistent Messaging

An appraisal of 58 statements by large and small businesses exposes a valid moral and financial impasse confronting corporate America. While several companies announced initiatives to donate to social justice non-profit organizations, a majority of the statements collected between May 26 and June 15, 2020 show that large and small businesses often used evasive language that protected emotions by White consumers that chose not to walk arm-in-arm with protesters and other citizens that sympathize with the Black Lives Matter sponsored demonstrations. The issuing of statements lacking substance will occur because it has evolved into a compulsory duty. After analyzing the data, we found that 26 of 58 (44%) statements referred to *institutional racism in policing* while only 8 of 58 (14%) mention *police violence* and 3 of 58 (5%) criticize policing. These numbers show that 56% of companies in this study avoid taking a bold stance against police violence. Of the 44% that addressed violence, only 14% acknowledged that there is an institutional problem when it comes to the disproportionate deaths of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement, and only 5% directed attention to the issues of policing.

Cory Maks-Solomon, lecturer of political science at George Washington University, suggests, “businesses often engage in social activism because they want to sway public policy outcomes, not solely to appeal to liberal customers and future employees.” Maks-Solomon presents the argument that corporate activism through company support of Black Lives Matter is, “a sincere engagement with the policymaking process.” Under a capitalist society, corporations are always tied to the purpose they serve

### **STATEMENT** **SPOTLIGHT**

#### Large and Small Businesses Launch “Open to All” Coalition

**Very early in the protests over the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others, several big brands united in a campaign called “Open to All.” The coalition encourages other businesses to take a stand against “systemic racism and hate violence.” The coalition’s founding members include Airbnb, Ben & Jerry’s, Fossil, Gap Inc., H&M, Levi Strauss & Co., Lyft, Movado Group, Ralph Lauren, Sephora, Tapestry Inc., Tiffany & Co., and Yelp. Within a month of its founding, Open to All had more than 200 members, including national and state education organizations, elected officials, large and small businesses, and nonprofit service providers. The coalition offers channels for companies to assist each other achieve equity.**

Read more at <https://www.opentoall.com/members/>

which is to generate capital. Because the nature of companies and corporations relies on a structure of inequality and class, the most that they may try to achieve to alleviate racial inequality is through policy reform. While policy reform suggests a step towards change, it is important to acknowledge a trend in the data. Many corporations that issued statements have been ineffective in promoting any lasting changes in the workplace, which may be seen in the following examples. During the month following George Floyd's death and the protests that ensued, corporate America has joined the chorus in making public remarks expressing support for the effort to dismantle racism. One of the most troubling occurrences in the corporate sector is the cases of businesses that have issued statements but gone on to punish employees for speaking out about racism in the workplace. For instance, Starbucks issued a public statement that earned four points out of eight on our grading scale, while proclaiming it would be "more inclusive" and "stand in solidarity with our Black partners, customers and communities."<sup>101</sup> Despite scoring in the medium range, the company prohibited its employees from wearing apparel showing support for the BLM movement. When challenged, the company tweeted an explanation, stating BLM attire violates its dress code, which prohibits employees from expressing "political, religion, or personal" statements. Starbucks employee Calvin Benson explained to BuzzFeed, "That statement prioritizes those who feel discomfort over Black lives." BuzzFeed goes on to address that other employees feel as though the statements made are "performative," "shallow," and "hypocritical" as the company openly allows support for other marginalized communities, such as the LGBTQ+ community.

Other companies that have faced similar backlash for publicly supporting BLM while privately regulating employees' behavior. A Publix Supermarket Company employee quit after he was told remove a mask endorsing the BLM movement. According to Yahoo Lifestyle, Publix refused to allow its employees to wear any clothing articles showing support for BLM while referencing their uniform policy that prohibits spreading a message that is not associated with the chain.

## **STATEMENT SPOTLIGHT**

### **GAP, INC. STATEMENT IS PERFECT ACCORDING TO OUR METRIC**

One of the most comprehensive statements offered by a representative of corporate America is the one issued by Gap Inc. on June 8. Utilizing its official website, Twitter, and a billboard in Times Square, the company followed up its acknowledgment of racial shortcomings with an action plan to develop and sustain a culture of equity. The "tough work" of advancing equity in Gap Inc., which includes Old Navy and Banana Republic, includes six "Real Talk" sessions with Inclusion Strategist Amber Cabral. The company is hosting additional meetings to educate members of the company on racial justice issues and how they can support Gap Inc.'s Black colleagues. Moreover, Gap Inc. has solicited outside groups' consultation services to help center the voices of its non-dominant cultural groups, some of whom are members of its diversity and inclusion council called Color Proud Council. The company also announced a \$300,000 donation to the NAACP and EmbraceRace.

Gap Inc.'s statement also pulled no punches against the policing system. Finally, the statement paid homage to police brutality victims, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Gap Inc.'s statement acknowledged the "exponential impacts" that police brutality has on "those who are already marginalized, such as transgender women of color." The complete statement can be viewed at <https://www.gapinc.com/en-us/articles/2020/06/united-for-justice-and-equality>.

Eighteen-year-old employee Quinton Desamours wore a mask with a “BLM” embroidery. Desamours said the assistant manager told him he had to remove the mask because, “[he was] endangering [himself] and everyone who worked there.” Publix responded to Desamours, stating, “Given the impact demand has had on availability, we have allowed associates to wear medical/surgical masks, dust masks and cloth face coverings until their uniform face coverings arrive in the coming days. Our uniform policy does not permit non-Publix messaging.” Desamours countered, “[I’ve] seen other employees wearing masks with prints on them that are not related to Publix.” It is worth noting that the Publix family heirs contribute to the political campaign of President Trump, a leading voice discrediting the BLM movement.

Maks-Soloman distinguishes between corporate activism (the act of businesses lobbying government for a change of public policy on social or moral issues) and corporate social responsibility (civic duty the company owes the community). His point is that the ideology of individual employees and leaders within a company serve to influence how corporate activism plays out. Many choose solidarity in the form of social activism. But solidarity is not enough. And yet, Consumers of Color and many White allies want to see companies do more than just stand in solidarity. They want to see donations made to the BLM movement and internal changes to hiring and inclusionary practices. According to Vox reporter Terry Nguyen, the phrase “open your purse” is becoming a trend for people criticizing brands. Nguyen compares the social media trend of #BlackOutTuesday, where a participant posted a single black square on its social media account to show solidarity with BLM, to when Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality. This square has seemingly become a symbol for solidarity despite its ineffectiveness in actually advocating for anything. It is easy to do, and it costs a company nothing. The black squares arguably do more to distract from the movement, as many consumers have been openly criticizing the trend. Similarly, empty statements do very little to dismantle racial injustice. One can argue, companies have actively benefited from racism. Amazon is one of the companies accused of profiting from inequality. Amazon once developed facial recognition software in collaboration with US law enforcement. The software for facial recognition is widely criticized as it disproportionately wrongly identifies Black faces and has exacerbated racism in the American criminal justice system. Meanwhile, Amazon has recently contributed \$10 million to nonprofit causes fighting racial injustice. In its statement, Amazon proclaimed, “We stand in

## **STATEMENT** **SPOTLIGHT**

### **BEN & JERRY’S PROVIDES A BLUEPRINT FOR HOW TO CRAFT A STATEMENT**

**Ben & Jerry’s CEO, Matthew McCarthy, consulted two advocacy groups, Color of Change and the NAACP, for advice on how to craft its statement. In final form, the statement derided the “bad apple” argument. It also presented a four-point plan for how to take down systemic racism, which included the endorsement of H.R. 40, legislation that would create a commission to study reparations. Ben & Jerry’s statement earned a score of 7/8 on our metric.**

solidarity with our Black employees, customers, and partners, and are committed to helping build a country and a world where everyone can live with dignity and free from fear.” Employees tend not to find this entirely true. Based on the scoring measures used in this study, Amazon scored a two out of eight-- earning a point in recognizing systemic racism and in taking action through donations. While donations are suitable for taking action, acknowledging the problem and how it reveals itself within the work environment is an essential factor to address and may have a more direct beneficial impact on the community.

Other companies researched in this study delivered statements that micro-aggressed intended audiences rather than provided a network of support during a time of peril. Microaggressions are subtle expressions of racial and cultural bias that serve to “other” People of Color, specifically African Americans. When companies fail to provide beneficial corporate social responsibility in the form of contributing support and by neglecting meaningful internal changes, the statement alone was counted as performative allyship. Two major factors of statements micro-invalidating Black Americans are: the failure to recognize police brutality as a source of the problem, as 86% of companies failed to do so, and failure to criticize policing, as 95% of companies failed to do so.

Black consumers and White allies appreciate companies speaking in support of BLM, but those groups want companies to change policy. Forbes’s Senior Contributor Janice Gassam writes that during hard times, it is difficult to distinguish “performative allyship” from “authentic and genuine intentions that will lead to actual change.” Performative allyship can be seen through the companies that scored low on our metric. It is also worth looking into those companies that actively contribute to President Trump’s re-election campaign. Disclosed on the app, Goods Unite Us, are companies recently donating to the Trump campaign, including Bank of America, Chipotle, CVS Pharmacy and Health, General Motors, McDonalds, and Wells Fargo. For those that issued a statement, each earned low scores on our metric.

# **Section Three**

## **Study Conclusions**

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# CONCLUSION

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## APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – THE GENERAL STUDY

The current findings add to the broader scholarship on the extent of endorsement of empathy, performative behavior, and race in America. Our results suggest that those who publicly identify with the fight against anti-Black racism sparingly follow through on meaningful internal change. When many elected officials, corporations, education institutions, and professional athletes present themselves or their organization in thoughtful ways and other, particularly White, individuals virtue-signal support for the crusade for a multiracial democracy, racial-ethnic minorities are likely to feel micro-aggressed and their efforts invalidated. These findings may explain why Blacks and other non-Black People of Color remain skeptical about both those that condemn racism and promise to dismantle systemic racism. A year before George Floyd's death, the Pew Research Center found that seven in 10 Americans believed race relations were growing worse.<sup>102</sup> Then, just days after our study commenced and once the Black Lives Matter protests over Floyd's death began, a Kaiser Family Foundation poll found 64% of Americans supported the protests against police violence.<sup>103</sup> However, by July, support for BLM decreased. According to Monmouth University, which conducts surveys almost every week since Floyd's death, most of the public (62%) said BLM hurts race relations in America, albeit crediting the movement for bringing attention to systemic racism.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, while we recognize the pendulum swings in support of Black Lives Matter causes, data suggests public opinion veers quickly back to the status quo.

Collectively the public statements we collected are incredibly ambiguous, and only meaningful action after the statements are made shapes their conviction. We have seen how certain statements connect to a specifically interpersonal history of race and racism. We also observed how a range of statements testify to a culture of exclusion. The fact of the matter is, most statements were broad in scope. We found that statements displaying greater empathy and understanding about systemic and institutional racism were authored by representatives of non-dominant cultural groups, namely women and People of Color. We also discovered that the best statements were written by individuals or organizations that sought guidance from a panel of advisors that reflected the audience they were trying to reach. Lastly, we found that those groups for which the statements were intended wanted to see practical action plans that explain how organizations will disrupt racist policy and practice instead of statements of regret and guilt.

Our current findings support applied implications for social, political, and corporate archetypes seeking to create more inclusive spaces. Later in this conclusion, we develop six recommendations to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion through intentional actions that dismantle racist policy and practice.

## LIMITATIONS

Limitations of the study should be noted. The criteria used to evaluate statements was developed so that the results would be determined in an objective manner. However, it is worth noting that based on

the statements, just 31% offered meaningful changes to internal institutional structure across sectors. The rating of the strength of statements was based on public discourse following the poorly delivered and inadequate apologies for being complicit in slavery and Jim Crowism issued by state legislatures more than a decade ago. Another constraint is the limitation of publicly available data at the time of research and, indeed, if opinions of a public statement may have changed or been expanded upon in the future past the cut off for data collection. Finally, we recognize that this study's scope did not allow us to examine long-term impacts of all 831 statements issued by school districts, politicians, large and small businesses, and professional sports teams and organizations. While readers found sections of this report praising transformative reactions by individuals and organizations after issuing a statement, it may be too soon to see the full impact of the great racial reckoning of 2020.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – UNITED STATES SENATORS**

Based on the data collected on all 100 United States Senators, we conclude that statements released by Democratic senators encompass more depth while better addressing the criteria found in our grading metric, thus aligning with Hypothesis 1. Regardless of political parties broken down by race, gender, or re-election status, Democrats scored higher, on average, than Republicans. Democrats also more frequently mentioned the “hot-button” issues of acknowledging wrongdoings to POC, how the senator plans to take action, and institutional/systemic racism. Whether restricted by partisan affiliation or a lack of empathy, Republicans released weaker statements that were deficient of calls for action. While similar shares of main statements from both Democrats and Republicans referenced Black Lives Matter, Democratic members better addressed racial injustices and more frequently created proposals for institutional change. Moreover, Democratic senators were more inclined to acknowledge, on average, the death of George Floyd than their Republican counterparts. Republican members tended to acknowledge the rioting more frequently than Democrats. Republicans were also more likely to praise the Trump Administration for appropriately sending a message to the country to restore order and keep Americans safe. For instance, Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) was quick to defend the president’s use of force in his statement. He said, “I don’t think anybody wants to send in the military [but] this is just intolerable . . . [and] we have to use all means to stop [the looting].”<sup>105</sup> These results support Hypotheses 2 and 3. Democratic senators were more likely to criticize Trump for his remarks, failure to acknowledge properly, and forceful removal of peaceful protesters for a photo-op, but they did so less frequently in their main statements. In a rare break, and a contradiction to Hypothesis 4, a few Republican senators also condemned Trump’s response and use of force in follow-up statements.<sup>106</sup> Overall, it is important to note that, the views of racism as a major problem have greatly increased.

From the analysis of official statements, it is clear that the remarks of senators are often dismissive and barely scratch the surface of the centuries of oppression that Black people have and continue to face in America. Senators continuously fail, regardless of political party, to adequately acknowledge the generations of injustice that Black and non-Black People of Color have dealt with. It is not surprising that the statements leave many feeling more offended than before. Although people look to these elected politicians to foster change, without owning up to America’s past and acknowledging the wrongs that have been committed, this historical pattern of racial injustice is expected to continue. Senators have to acknowledge past silence and inaction to try and prevent injustices like Floyd’s death. These public statements will be accepted as authentic if senators craft testimonies about personal growth set against simple proclamations that America has problems that can no longer be ignored. With very few

politicians acknowledging the existence of systemic racism or how they intend to fix the problem, these statements predict a scary future that mirrors America's segregated and alienating past.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – UNITED STATES GOVERNORS**

As reflected by the 50 governors' average score of 2.88 out of 8, it is evident that state governments in America have not done enough overall to further the progress of the Black Lives Matter movement. This lack of racial and social leadership, in turn, perpetuates institutional racism throughout the country. As Ibram X. Kendi, Director of The Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University, states, "Denial is the heartbeat of racism."<sup>107</sup> Kendi insists that by denying the existence of overt and covert racism altogether, White lawmakers are also ignoring the suffering of ethnic minorities due to racist policies.<sup>108</sup> Because the language of several governors' statements is vague and non-committal regarding the future of these racist policies, many citizens are left in the dark about their government's intentions. The main cause of the governor's low average score of 2.88 was the use of language that is counteractive to what the Black Lives Matter movement is trying to achieve. Most low-scoring statements did not mention the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor while many medium and high-scoring statements included their names along with specific information about how the government was going to amend racial disparities in their state. By excluding information on the killings that sparked the most recent protests, statements by many of America's governors convey an attitude of indifference to the same citizens they took an oath to protect. Americans of Color will continue to suffer if legislators do not respond with the urgency needed for tangible change.

As reported by the Pew Research Center, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to support the Black Lives Matter movement. In a survey conducted in early June of 2020, 62% of Democrats said they "strongly supported" the movement, compared to 10% of Republicans.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, 28% of Democrats said they only "somewhat supported" the Black Lives Matter movement while 30% of Republicans felt the same way.<sup>110</sup> Aligning with this data, Democratic governors whose statements were evaluated with our metric generally scored higher than Republican governors, thus aligning with Hypothesis 2. Similarly, as confirmed by my data, Southern governors scored lower than the other regions in the United States. The average score from 16 Southern governors was 2.31, nine Northeastern governors scored a 3.56, 12 Midwestern governors scored a 2.92, and 13 Western governors scored a 3.08. This data aligned with Hypothesis 1. As further represented by my data, governors with hopes of re-election in 2020 released lower scores than governors who will remain in office. The nine governors running for re-election received an average score of 2.22, which is below the overall average of 2.88, and thus aligns with Hypothesis 6. This outcome was predicted because the governors running for re-election are more likely to be invested in their personal political agendas, not necessarily on current social movements. Although the Black Lives Matter movement may seem significant to some of them, all of the governors running for re-election are White males who are already campaigning for their own policies. Additionally, because the 2020 elections are only five months away from the killing of George Floyd, many governors are likely worried about being divisive. By taking a strong stance on either side of the movement, many governors could risk a large voter constituency in their state. Six of the nine governors running for re-election are Republican and scored an average of 1.67, while the remaining three Democrats scored an average of 3.33. Governors with Republican agendas in the 2020 gubernatorial elections were less supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement than Democrats overall.

Because the Trump Administration has been mostly hostile toward the Black Lives Matter movement, governors who support the president are also likely to ignore issues of institutional racism. On

Juneteenth, a holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in America, Vice President Mike Pence repeatedly refused to say the words “Black lives matter” in an interview on a Philadelphia television station.<sup>111</sup> Instead claiming that “all lives matter,” Pence perpetuated the same non-committal attitude that poses such a large problem in America. During Donald Trump’s address on June 1, 2020, one week after the death of George Floyd, the President used fewer than 20 seconds of his seven-minute speech to address the murder specifically. He used the rest of his time to address instead the rioting and looting taking place, promising the American people that he would restore order to the nation.<sup>112</sup> With most United States governors being Republican, the bias of state offices is likely to lean in favor of the current Presidential Administration, which is further represented in my data. As previously discussed, the 19 governors who outwardly support President Trump on Twitter received an average score of 1.63, placing them far below the overall average of 2.88. Furthermore, all 18 Republican governors who support Trump on Twitter received a score of 3 or lower. This data supports Hypothesis 3, and the correlation that governors who support Trump and his policies are likely to score lower than governors who do not. Republican governors were also more likely to release vague statements that did not align with the Black Lives Matter movement’s objectives. For example, of the 16 governors who included a plan to address future racism issues, only three were Republican. Similarly, of the 15 governors who specifically mention institutional racism, only two were Republican. By valuing politics over human rights, President Trump and the Republican governors who support him have slowed the Black Lives Matter movement’s progress and perpetuated issues of systemic racism.

When there are few Candidates of Color on a ballot sheet, ethnic minorities are less likely to vote in an election.<sup>113</sup> The absence of a diverse electorate, in turn, leads to a deficiency of social policies that benefit Citizens of Color, and an influx of policies that benefit White citizens. This pattern is seen in legislation affecting women as well. When there is a low percentage of female lawmakers, policies that support women’s rights are likely to be eradicated. As previously discussed, there are currently only three Governors of Color in the United States. Muriel Bowser (D-DC) was additionally included in this data because she is the mayor of Washington D.C., and she is the only African American incumbent whose statement we evaluated. The three Governors of Color – Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM), David Ige (D-HI), and Kevin Stitt (R-OK) – received an average score of 2.00 out of 8. Grisham scored a 3, Ige scored a 2, and Stitt scored a 1. While their average is lower than the 2.94 scored by the remaining 47 White governors, this evaluation does not align with Hypothesis 5. What is more concerning for the American people is the current lack of diversity within state governments’ executive position. Along these same lines, there are presently only nine female governors in the United States. These nine women – Kay Ivey (R-AL), Kim Reynolds (R-IA), Laura Kelly (D-KS), Janet Mills (D-ME), Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI), Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM), Kate Brown (D-OR), Gina Raimondo (D-RI), and Kristi Noem (R-SD) – received an average score of 4.00 out of 8. Although there are not nearly as many female governors as male governors, this average is far higher than the male’s average score of 2.63, thus aligning with Hypothesis 4; this is perhaps because most female governors are also Democrats, who received higher scores in general. With only three Governors of Color and nine female governors currently holding office in the United States, policies supporting ethnic minorities and women are likely to diminish.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT**

Based on the analysis of the statements released by the current and past Presidents and the Executive Branch, it is now possible to return to the hypotheses made prior to research. As shown in the statements from the Executive Branch, the prevalence of hollow words and the lack of any true

solutions confirms hypothesis 1 (we anticipated remarks that would deflect responsibility about the shortcomings of the criminal justice system). This was evident via the lack of any solutions from the Executive Branch and improperly developed claims in interviews. Of all statements analyzed, only one offered concrete solution: The televised statement by Obama, who is no longer a member of the Executive Branch, but included in this study purposes of comparing presidential leadership on matters concerning race. A faux solution offered in too many statements was to have the population begin to ask themselves what they can do to end the racial divides in this country. Statements by Presidents Clinton and Bush offered this point of reflection. Without plans for policy reform, systemic and institutional race problems in the country simply cannot be resolved, and the solution of *internal reflection* is far from policy reform.

Additionally, of the 11 statements analyzed, 0 admit to any personal wrongdoings to POC, thus aligning with hypothesis 2 which stated that there wouldn't be admission of guilt from politicians in fear of losing the voting public.

Finally, it was common to see the Executive Branch statements ally with law enforcement over Black Lives Matter. While is the researchers of this study agree that federal government officials have every right to express support for law enforcement, we find this an omission of critical thought that could possibly lead to improved policing practices if approached differently. Claims by Secretary Wolf and President Trump, in particular, openly sided with law enforcement while maintaining an anti-protest stance. This supports hypothesis 3.

The statements offered in these times of trouble by those with the power to make change were unmistakably *political*. With no admission of guilt, solutions, and an acknowledgement of the reasons behind public unrest in the wake of the deaths of Floyd, Taylor, Arbery, and Brooks, there is little hope for systemic and institutional reform. In effect, the statements offered serve as placeholders to quell the nation with false hope that solutions are *in the works*.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: HIGHER EDUCATION AND PK-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

For authentic equitable changes to occur in America's schools, institutions of higher education and PK-12 public school districts could have utilized the opportunity to make public statements condemning institutional racism to also announce changes to school policy. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color were looking for school leaders to offer a degree of solace; a promise that college administrators, public school superintendents, school boards, and principals would guarantee an inclusive environment before the start of the fall 2020 school term. For instance, administrators at each level should have announced a forthcoming plan designed to support students from historically marginalized communities, especially as it pertains to zero tolerance disciplinary policies (detention, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, expulsions) that disproportionately impact Students of Color as early as preschool. Creating a strong statement to address improvements to discipline should be at the forefront of public statements issued by educators.

Instead, most colleges, universities, and school districts that issued statements said little about the topics most concerning Students of Color and teacher-activists. Withholding comments about police reform, school disciplinary reform, and Black Lives Matter, college presidents, provosts, public school superintendents, school board members, and principals charged with writing public statements appear

to be avoiding confrontation with parents, taxpayers, and unsupportive students and faculty that reside and work in their districts and colleges.

In our predictions for PK-12 public schools, it was hypothesized that school districts would endorse antiracist education and display support for students of historically marginalized communities (Hypothesis 1). This was seen in 100% of urban school districts, 32.56% of suburban school districts, and 5.88% of rural districts. While urban school districts seem to follow expectations, suburban and rural school districts did not release statements addressing the current issues of historically marginalized communities in our school districts.

We also trusted that public school districts would acknowledge that equity gaps exist in their districts and would consequentially offer action plans to address such educational shortcomings (Hypothesis 2). Of the 144 public school districts examined, 36% of urban districts, 14% of suburban districts, and 4% of rural districts provided detailed action plans to amend policies and curriculum to help Students of Color. Despite the fact that data shows urban school districts exceeded both rural and suburban school districts with announcing a school reform plan, overall less than a third of school districts offered its students strategies to close equity gaps that keep historically marginalized students at an academic disadvantage.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES**

The data has shown that female, veteran, and Black athletes are more likely to release stronger and more authentic statements regarding the BLM movement compared to their male, younger, or White counterparts. Of the athletes that scored a 4 or above, 25% were White/veteran/male, 38% were Black/young/male, 25% were Black/veteran/male, and 12% were Black/veteran/female. The first hypothesis that young athlete's statements would score higher than veteran athlete's statements was proven false by the data. The second hypothesis that Athletes of Color would score higher than White athletes was proven correct with the data. The third hypothesis that male athletes would score higher than female athletes was proven false by the data. If not for the age, race and gender of the professional athletes making statements about Black Lives Matter, what these statements show is that White Americans have only recently begun to realize the racial issues plaguing America that BIPOC stomached for decades.

## **APPLIED IMPLICATIONS – CORPORATE AMERICA**

By examining 58 corporate statements, we found that statements used evasive language that protected White Americans from complicity in systemic racism. While toeing a line preserves the loyalty of White consumers, the statements often micro-agress Black Americans and exist as micro-invalidation that negate the feelings and experiences of Persons of Color. Data shows that 7% of companies scored a six or above. A higher score indicated that the company provided specific details about its drive for change (hypothesis 1).

Our examination of corporate America also argued that corporations that sold products to more progressive and diverse consumers would issue meaningful statement when compared to companies tailored toward conservative circles. This hypothesis was disproven. The data suggests that many companies remained largely neutral on their stances (66% scored between two and four).

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Our findings and analyses led to a series of recommendations for how school and corporate leaders, sports programs and leagues, and lawmakers can take action before and after issuing support for antiracism causes. Each of our solutions are positioned so leaders can work to reform policy and practice at their very own organization.**

## **Solution 1:**

When writing public statements about race, private racism, institutional and systemic racism, and Black Lives Matter, seek help from a diverse group, namely individuals representing historically marginalized groups, to validate that the words used don't micro-aggress and to ensure follow-through on pledges made in the statement.

### **Additional Resources**

Derald Wing Sue. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*

Mahzarin R. Banaji. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*

Monnica T. Williams. *Managing Microaggressions: Addressing Everyday Racism in Therapeutic Spaces*

Matthew Syed. *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking*

Corinne Post, et al. "Capitalizing on Thought Diversity for Innovation"

## **Solution 2:**

Ensure that you and your employees continuously interrogate personal biases to understand how they inform behavior. Take and retake the implicit association tests provided by Harvard University's Project Implicit. Without sharing results, discuss with a diverse group of colleagues underlying causes of biased behavior. Also look into self-reflection tests produced by the American Psychological Association for help understanding the adverse impact biased actions by social and civil leaders can have on the public.

### **Additional Resources**

Jennifer L. Eberhardt. *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*

Gina Laura Gullo and Kelly Capatosto, et al. *Implicit Bias in Schools*

Pamela Fuller, Mark Murphy, et al. *The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias: How to Reframe Bias, Cultivate Connection, and Create High-Performing Teams*

Jonathan Kahn. *Race on the Brain: What Implicit Bias Gets Wrong about the Struggle for Racial Justice*

### Solution 3:

Prioritize racial and gender representation in your respective field. In the field of education, conduct content analyses of curricula to discover what voices are missing. Schools, lawmakers, and corporations, including sports leagues and associations, commit to intentional hiring for diversity. Ensure your hiring team is diverse. During the interview process, ask questions that force candidates to respond to racial presumptions. Fill board rooms, front offices, and political staffing positions with diverse representation.

#### Additional Resources

Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*

Lila Kelly. *Integrate Diversity into Recruiting, Interviewing and Hiring*

Bari A. Williams. *Diversity in the Workplace: Eye-opening Interviews to Jumpstart Conversations about Identity, Privilege, and Bias*

Sharon Bramlett-Solomon and Meta G. Carstarphen. *Race, Gender, Class, and Media: Studying Mass Communication and Multiculturalism*

### Solution 4:

Make race consciousness or antiracism part of your institution's mission and vision statements. Hiring a chief diversity officer into senior management will help facilitate this initiative.

#### Additional Resources

Cornell West. *Race Matters*

Michael Levin. *Why Race Matters*

Ibram X. Kendi. *How to Be An Antiracist*

Donte Stallworth. "I Played in the N.F.L. It Needs Way More Than a Black Anthem." *The New York Times*

Todd M. Mealy. *Race Conscious Pedagogy: Disrupting Racism at Majority White Schools*

Pirette McKamey. "What Anti-Racist Teachers Do Differently." *The Atlantic*

Podcast: "Intersectionality Matters" with Kimberle Crenshaw

### Solution 5:

With or without a chief diversity officer, hire an outside group to conduct an equity audit of your school, company, or organization. Action is needed in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the protests that ensued. While relatively popular in education, equity audits are needed in every sector of American society. Audits are quantitative and qualitative studies of the dynamics in an institution to identify and fix disparities and micro- and macro-aggressive acts.

### **Additional Resources**

Annika Olson. "Equity Audits Should Be Commonplace." *Inside Higher Ed*

Mark R. Kramer. "The 10 Commitments Companies Must Make to Advance Racial Justice." *Harvard Business Review*

Caprice Hollins and Ilsa Govan. *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategies for Facilitating Conversations on Race*

Rhodes Perry. *Belonging at Work: Everyday Actions You Can Take to Cultivate an Inclusive Organization*

Podcast: "Leading Equity" with Sheldon L. Eakins

### **Solution 6:**

Support and enact reparations in your institution. On July 14, the city council in Asheville, North Carolina voted to issue reparations for the city's role in slavery, de jure discrimination, and de facto segregation. The city council is investing money in affordable housing, business and home ownership, career opportunities, and healthcare. All are areas where Black Asheville residents face disparities.<sup>114</sup> Earlier in 2020, Evanston, Illinois voted to use tax revenue on the cannabis industry, which became legal in the state that January, to fund a \$10 million reparation initiative. The cases in Asheville and Evanston illustrate various ways reparations could be paid out.

### **Additional Resources**

William A. Darity and A. Kirsten Mullen. *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century*

Joe Feagin. *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*

Randall Robinson. *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*

Ta-Nehisi Coates. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*

Rashawn Ray and Andre M. Perry. "Why we need reparations for Black Americans." *Brookings*

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