



Dear Dean Bierschbach,

We write this letter on behalf of the Executive Board of the Black Law Student Association ('BLSA') at Wayne State University Law School ('Wayne Law'). Enclosed in this letter is a list of demands describing the concrete steps that Wayne Law and its administrators can take as it thinks through ways to provide more support and opportunity to its Black students and community members, as well as the Detroit community in which it sits.

We would like to start this letter by extending gratitude for the statement that the Deans Office released on June 5, 2020. Specifically, we appreciate the profound sadness and anger expressed in your message regarding the unjustified and inexcusable murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others not mentioned by name. We also recognize your willingness to call out the long, systemic, and repeated history of racism and brutalization against Black people in America. However, we would be remiss if we allowed you and the Wayne Law community to believe that these injustices are *only now* of national concern, that these injustices are merely of momentary significance, or that your message sufficiently addresses the severity of the issues that impact Black life at Wayne Law.

Unfortunately, we, as educated Black professionals, have learned to live with the looming generational pain that our country only experienced a taste of on May 25, 2020 with George Floyd's public execution. We feel that generational pain each day we attend a law school that, although it is located in Detroit, a majority Black city, has low numbers of Black enrollment and dismal numbers of Black faculty and administrators. Each day we face institutional and structural racism on both a macro and micro level at Wayne Law and beyond.

BLSA's mission is to promote and articulate the educational, professional, political and social needs and goals of Black law students. We are dedicated to promoting and increasing Black legal representation while simultaneously advancing a collective effort to create positive structural and eradicate systematic racism.

As Black people we have been directly impacted for generations by structural inequalities and systematic racism. We are tired, exhausted, and overwhelmed. Your sympathy, thoughts, and prayers are helpful, but it is not nearly enough. Indeed, we need and require your action. As the Dean of Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan with a Black population of over 80%, you have an obligation not only to the next generation of attorneys, judges, and lawmakers but also to the Detroit community in which Wayne Law sits.

Your correspondence was a step in the right direction, and we need more from the faculty, staff, and the greater Wayne Law community. Below is a list of demands that we believe will further amplify the statements in your letter to the student body. The demands include:

1. Implementation of a Diversity Committee that works to diversify both the student body and the Faculty at Wayne Law. This committee will also oversee the retention of Black staff and the success of Black students. It will be composed of two Black students, the Dean of the Law School, three members of the faculty, and a newly created Student Affairs position. This person will carry out the duties previously held by Dean Thomas. He or she will provide not only academic support but personal, emotional, and professional support to Black students.
2. A mandatory service initiative in the city of Detroit that Wayne Law must complete bi-annually. We owe a debt to the community for allowing our law school to sit in an area that we are so drastically disconnected from, we must not ever forget that a thriving Black community was destroyed so that Wayne State could be built and so that we may have the privilege of learning at a school located in the heart of the city.<sup>1</sup> This service initiative should directly impact residents of the city and NOT just residents of the downtown area.
3. A budget of \$5,000 annually for BLSA to host programs that will increase the visibility of Wayne Law in the Detroit community while continuing to inspire students to seek higher education, even if that is not necessarily law. These programs include but will not be limited to BLSA's Be The Change event, which was piloted on March 6, 2020. By proceeding in this way, Wayne Law can become involved in a meaningful way with Detroit Public Schools and expose Detroit youth to the many career paths law can provide them. We will also use these funds to create a BLSA Emergency Fund for its members facing challenges that directly affect their academic success.
4. The immediate help from the Wayne Law Faculty to locate and collect contact information for Black Wayne Law Alum since 1927 and to support BLSA's regular Black Alumni Programming.
5. Mandatory promotion of ANTI-racism by use of Ibram X. Kendi's, *How to be an Antiracist*, as a core mission for the Wayne Law community. (Other options on Anti-Racism Resources <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a->

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<sup>1</sup> Cass Corridor

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6. Wayne Law to make annual donations DIRECTLY to an organization whose mission is designed specifically to uplift the Black community.
  
7. Requiring faculty, staff, administration and the student body to go through “cultural competency” training; cultural competency training would promote empathy and sensitivity, allow participants to realize their biases and work to heal them. (It will be for a length significantly longer than one video during 1L Orientation, preferably four weeks.)
  
8. Changes to the Law School’s curriculum. We call for a well-developed program in Critical Race Theory and Movement Lawyering. As it currently stands, there are only five courses that address the intricacies of racism and institutional oppression. Those courses are *Race and the Law*, *Detroit Equity Action Lab Seminar*, *Race, the Law and Social Change in Southeast Michigan*, *Law of the City Seminar* and *Reimagining Development in Detroit Seminar*. We demand to expand these kinds of courses to *Race and Mass Incarceration*, *Advanced Civil Rights Litigation*, *Black Lives Matter and the Law*, *Fundamentals in Movement Lawyering*, and a *Cultural Appropriation Seminar*. We want to emphasize that the existence of these courses is valuable, and necessary in molding law graduates that are aware and sensitive to the long history of racism and brutalization against Black people in the United States.

We hope that Wayne Law will build on these demands intentionally and continuously because the work does not stop here. BLSA is looking forward to making differences in our society and we will not yield to the traps of temporary outrage or the ineffectiveness of a short-term memory regarding the brutality, dehumanization, bias, and discrimination that plagues Black life in America and all around the world. We want to see your words come to fruition. We do not want your email to move further and further down into our inboxes without its sentiments revisited or its proposals acted upon regularly. BLSA will continue to entrust the Deans Office and the Wayne Law community at large to support our members. We hope that our words and proposals will thrive alongside your interests and ideas for making Wayne Law a better place to learn. We believe in Wayne Law and we believe that this community can be a part of the larger change we want to see in the world.

Thank you for your attention to these pressing matters. We look forward to your response and to collectively transform your words into actions.

*“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”* — Martin Luther King, Jr.

Best Regards,

*Black Law Students Association of Wayne State University Law School  
and*

In Solidarity,

Journal of Law in Society 2020-2021

Wayne Law Moot Court 2020-2021

Student Bar Association Board of Governors 2020-2021

Wayne Law National Lawyers Guild 2020-2021

Women’s Law Caucus 2020-2021

Delta Theta Phi, CB Warren Chapter 2020-2021

Mock Trial 2020-2021

Criminal Law Society 2020- 2021

OutLaws 2020-2021

Asian Pacific American Law Students Association 2020-2021

Muslim Law Students Association 2020-2021

Journal of Business Law 2020-2021

Latinx Law Student Association 2020-2021

Health Law Society 2020-2021

If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice 2020-2021

American Constitution Society 2020-2021