

To the graduate employees and students at the University of Missouri:

Graduate employees at the University of Oregon, represented by the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), stand with you in unity and solidarity as witnesses of the horrific racist violence that has erupted on and eroded your campus. We are deeply troubled, saddened, and angered by these recent events, and we want you to know that you are not alone. People of color, and particularly those who are black, within our campus community at the University of Oregon have also been victims of racist violence on and near our campus. We will not tolerate this. We will do whatever we can from our position to help, whether by providing material support, or through educating everyone we can in our immediate community about the violence inherent to racist beliefs which pervade our campuses, our society, and our government.

We strongly believe in the power of collective organizing and action; we are impressed and moved by the courage of the student activists and organizers who took a powerful stand against hateful racist acts and the oppressive administration led by Tim Wolfe. We are inspired by Jonathan Butler's courageous hunger strike, an action that ultimately encouraged student athletes to strike in protest and expedite Wolfe's resignation. This is testament to the power of collective action and organized labor. We support the unionization of student athletes; we believe that labor unions and the labor movement more broadly can and should do everything possible to advocate for students and workers of color, of all sexual and gender identities and religious and cultural backgrounds. Entering our new round of collective bargaining with the University of Oregon administration, we are asking for mandatory comprehensive trainings on cultural competency and racial, sexual, and gender-based harassment. We hope that this will move our institution and our community one step closer to ending systemic racism and sexism, and that it will further clarify and solidify the strong connection between collective bargaining and racial justice.

In this vein, the GTFF recognizes that racial justice and economic justice are intimately linked. We stand in solidarity with University of Missouri graduate employees, and congratulate you on winning the recent fight to keep your health insurance this past summer. We know from experience how difficult it is to organize and stand up for workers' and students' rights in the face of university administrations who often only have the immediate budgetary interests of their institutions in mind. We also know how tirelessly and repeatedly institutional employers will try to take away or diminish basic rights such as healthcare. We commend Mizzou graduate employees for fighting to protect your rights as university laborers.

We believe in the union process and are committed to continue working toward fair and equitable relations between administrators and campus employees, and we look forward to continued camaraderie with graduate employees and their unions. Collective organizing and solidarity are more important now than ever, as labor unions across the United States brace themselves and prepare for the upcoming Supreme Court decision on the Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association case. The Missouri governor's recent decision to overturn Right to Work legislation in the state of Missouri affords us some hope, but we also know that - whether we are confronted with injustice due to our racial identities or our status as laborers - we are only stronger when we stand together.

In solidarity,

The Executive Council of the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation,  
AFT local 3544  
Eugene, Oregon