



## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

March 5, 2021

To members of the University community, and the community of Mobile,

We, the faculty members of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at the University of South Alabama, condemn in the strongest possible terms all acts of racism on our campus, both intentional and inadvertent. Racism denies the inherent dignity of all members of our community, especially those who belong to historically marginalized groups.

As social scientists we are conscious of the long history of discrimination and violence against people of color in the United States and throughout much of the world. We recognize that racial injustice is premised on the false claims of “scientific” racism, developed centuries ago to rationalize slavery by denying the fundamental unity of all members of the human family. These claims were long ago refuted in the social and biological sciences, but sadly persist in much of the culture at large. Today they take myriad forms, from terrorist violence, to unfounded beliefs in white racial superiority, to a callous indifference to others’ lived experience. The racist images that recently resurfaced involving faculty members of the Mitchell College of Business are sad reminders that gross insensitivity infects some members of our campus community as well.

Such images and the attitudes they represent have no place on our campus. This point was emphasized by the University administration in response to another racist incident, the 2018 display of two nooses in a public place. Recognizing that the noose serves as a threatening symbol of racial intimidation, the University investigated the incident and suspended the student responsible for this action. We are saddened to note that one of the recently resurfaced images involving faculty members also contained a noose. Faculty and staff should be held to no lower standard than others on this campus; accordingly, we support the convening of an independent investigation into the incident and call upon the University to address its findings and recommendations and to act appropriately.

Public silence serves to excuse the attitudes that enable racial discrimination and violence. As scholars, we pledge in our teaching, service, and research to reveal and confront the legacies of slavery and institutional racism in our society. Our study of racial injustice cross-culturally and in the past encourages us to seek knowledge that promotes inclusive social change and human understanding. We therefore call upon the University to redouble its efforts in building the institutional structures and initiatives needed to promote racial justice. This must include an enhanced commitment to recruiting faculty of color to ensure that the voices and experience of marginalized communities are heard in the classroom. We also call on the University to affirm and strengthen those programs that have made the study of racial inequity and racial justice their hallmarks.