



Resolution: The Awujo House/Black House
Author(s): Nikita Hamilton, Director of Communications; Andy Le, School of Social Work; Christina Gutierrez, Senator for Graduate Policy and Administration Community
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WHEREAS, the University of Southern California’s mission is to welcome, “outstanding men and women of every race, creed and background” to attend the university¹;

WHEREAS, it is important to provide a sense of belonging and comfort on campus to all students, both undergraduate and graduate, in order to ensure their holistic success;

WHEREAS, many Black students, both undergraduate and graduate, are dissatisfied with the current campus climate in regards to the inclusivity of the Trojan family;

WHEREAS, 36% of Black undergraduate students ranked “available social space” as the least satisfying component of their experience at USC²;

WHEREAS, the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs is a resource center that primarily serves as an office space operating during normal business hours, and thus cannot provide adequate space and flexible hours to accommodate the programmatic needs of Black students and organizations;

WHEREAS, Somerville Place, an African American themed floor in an on campus residence hall, is limited to only 32 first year students;

¹ https://about.usc.edu/files/2011/07/USCRole_and_Mission_Statement_1993.pdf

² Based on a survey of 116 Black students conducted by the Undergraduate Student Government.

WHEREAS, the problems Black students have while attending a predominantly white institution (PWI) persist past their first year;

WHEREAS, peer institutions such as Stanford University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Brown University, George Washington University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and California State University Northridge have already established Black Houses on their campuses devoted to bolstering a greater sense of community for students;

WHEREAS, although our university boasts a diverse student body in terms of numbers, the different communities are often segregated from one another and the creation of a Black House will serve as a means to educate all students, both undergraduate and graduate, about the African diaspora,

WHEREAS, a space where prospective and incoming students of color can openly and honestly engage with one another to gain a student's perspective on the Black experience at USC does not currently exist;

WHEREAS, "sense of belonging" is the second least satisfying component of the USC experience for 29% of Black undergraduate students³;

WHEREAS, there is a substantial discrepancy between the graduation rate for Black students at USC which is approximately 83%, and the university-wide graduation rate of approximately 92%⁴;

WHEREAS, studies show that there is a direct correlation between retention rates and students' sense of belonging, especially among students of color;

WHEREAS, a USC Black House would create the space needed to provide members of the Black community with a greater sense of belonging, which has the potential to drastically increase retention and graduation rates at USC for Black students;

WHEREAS, a USC Black House would also allow for a space in which Black graduate students could present work, conduct research, and mentor Black undergraduate students, which has the potential to drastically increase retention and graduation rates at USC for all Black students, both undergraduate and graduate;

³ Based on a survey of 116 Black students conducted by the Undergraduate Student Government.

⁴ According to Dr. Michele Turner, Executive Director of the USC Black Alumni Association.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the University of Southern California will accommodate the needs of Black students through the creation of a Black House;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this space will be managed by the Undergraduate Student Government, which includes the Black Student Assembly and the Diversity Affairs Committee;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this space will feature flexible programming capabilities, access to 24/7 reservation for all students, fax machines, printers and other resources that would contribute to the success of all students on this campus;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this space will not tolerate alcohol, smoking, or the use of illegal substances, and noise level in the house must be kept reasonable at all times, as per Los Angeles ordinances;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, utilizing the space will be free of charge to all students and recognized student organizations, but violations of any of the above conditions will result in potential fines and denial of future use;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be delivered to President C.L. Max Nikias, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Michael Quick, Vice Provost for Graduate Programs Sally Pratt, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs Michael Quick, Vice Provost of Student Affairs Ainsley Carry, Vice President of Admissions Katharine Harrington, Assistant Provost for Student Engagement Monique Allard, Executive Director of the USC Office of Equity and Diversity Jody Shipper, Director of the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs Corliss McBride, Black Alumni Association Executive Director Michele Turner, and USG President Andrew Menard by within 2 weeks of being passed by the Graduate Student Government Senate.

Signed by President, Yohey Tokumitsu on April 27, 2015

Signed by Incoming President, Nikita Hamilton on April 27, 2015