Dear USC Community,

We want to recognize and thank the students, alumni, and community members who have gone out of their way to share personal and painful stories of microaggressions and racist behaviors at USC through the Instagram account @black_at_usc. We recognize the trauma of reliving these experiences and want to express our full support for the individuals who have come forward to share their stories. We hear you, support you, and believe you.

Graduate Student Government does not tolerate or condone any prejudices or misconduct related to students’ cultural, racial/ethnic, socio-economic, ability, gender identity and expression, sexual, and/or religious orientation. Student organizations are obligated to follow the USC Code of Ethics, which states that we must “nurture an environment of mutual respect and tolerance, [ . . . ] treat everyone with respect and dignity, [ . . . ] and speak out against hatred and bigotry whenever and wherever we find them.” Community leadership is a privilege. When students feel that their leaders have violated this code, and have lost faith in their representatives, they are justified in demanding new leadership. We are disappointed to learn of the various misconduct and microaggression allegations against current and previous Undergraduate Student Government (USG) executive leadership members. We urge the USG Senate to listen to student voices and recommendations as they move forward in their investigation and towards disciplinary action in addressing these allegations.

We also want to address student sentiments regarding lack of diversity and racial sensitivity in several student organizations at USC. Anti-blackness and racism are endemic to USC. As a governing board in the Trojan community, GSG recognizes its responsibility to confront and dismantle racism across our campuses. GSG is committed to building a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and safe learning environment on campus for all graduate students. As stated in our recent memo, we are making anti-racism and racial justice a core value of GSG and are committed to recruiting a diverse leadership team that prioritizes respect, social justice, and inclusivity. Though our community expands over several campuses at USC, we want you to know that we are and will always be committed to hearing, serving, and advocating for the wants and needs of our entire graduate student body. We recognize that in order to do so we must
prioritize hearing student voices and experiences. If you’d like to contact us or any of our members, the contact information for all Executive Board members can be found on the GSG website as well as a list of all Senate meetings held throughout the academic year. We eagerly encourage any and all students to reach out to us with questions, concerns, comments, or ideas about what GSG can do to better advocate for the graduate student body. We have also created an online form where students can share the types of programs, events, and advocacy initiatives they’d like to see GSG host throughout the school year.

Unfortunately, the countless stories of racism and discrimination at USC that have come to light in recent days are not new. We urge allies to self-educate on the history of racism in America and higher education and not further burden Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) peers. We believe the BIPOC students, faculty, and staff who are asked to lead USC on the path to diversity, equity, and inclusion should be compensated for their work.

Our job is to administer our resources, guide advocacy efforts, and provide programming to enhance the social, emotional, mental, and intellectual wellbeing of our graduate students. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on how we can best do so, now or in the future, please do not hesitate to let us know. We are always listening.

In solidarity,

USC Graduate Student Government Executive Board

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1 For those interested in committing to anti-racist work, this resource list compiled by UNC is a great place to begin.

2 Another great resource, this guide to anti-racism was developed by past GSG Executive Board member Tori Alexander.