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Dear Members of our UCLA Political Science Community,

We hope you and your loved ones are safe and well during this difficult time. We reach out to you because on June 2, a lecturer in our department, in two separate classes, gave a lecture about the history of racism against African Americans in the United States. During both classes, the lecturer read aloud the text of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which included the n-word. The lecturer also showed a portion of a documentary which included graphic images and descriptions of lynching, with a narrator who quoted the n-word in explaining the history of lynching. Many students expressed distress and anger regarding the lecture and the lecturer's response to their concerns during the lecture, particularly given the pain already felt in the aftermath of the senseless killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and countless others.

The lecturer's response to students' concerns escalated the situation rather than engaging in the thoughtful and open discourse that we expect from our faculty. We share students' concerns that the lecturer did not simply pause and reassess their teaching pedagogy to meet the students' needs, particularly during this sensitive time.

In particular, we acknowledge how deeply this has impacted many Black students in the course. We have thanked them for their courage in speaking up during and after class, and demanding to be *seen and heard*. We are sorry this situation has caused additional pain during what is already a very traumatic time for our community and our nation.

We understand that the lecturer has reflected on these actions and has issued a written and video apology to all students in the two classes.

We know this letter cannot change what happened. We fully acknowledge the painful historical legacies of the n-word and we share concerns that it was especially insensitive and hurtful, particularly during this moment when we bear witness to the implications of systemic racism and violence toward the African American community.

Our department values our students and wants them to thrive, in the face of all challenges and during this most difficult quarter. We believe it is the instructor's responsibility to create a classroom environment in which all students feel respected, valued, and heard. We believe these values do not prevent us from engaging all subjects in a thoughtful and responsible way, while recognizing one another's humanity. We can and will do better.

The Department of Political Science has referred this matter to UCLA's Discrimination Prevention Office. All students with direct knowledge of this situation have been encouraged to discuss their concerns with that office by contacting Dion Raymond and Lillie Hsu at dpo@equity.ucla.edu.

We are actively working to respond and to take action. The first thing we can do is to simply listen to our students and community and provide a space for students to engage with us and one another. We seek to acknowledge and understand broader concerns about how our department can do the work to implement changes in our undergraduate teaching and learning environment.

We will be hosting a town hall for all students in the two classes on Tuesday, June 9, at 6 p.m., which will be facilitated by Lorrie Frasure, Vice Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science and African American Studies. We will use the information from the town hall to outline future next steps.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Chwe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Chwe
Professor and Chair

Lorrie Frasure
Associate Professor and Vice Chair for Graduate Studies

Chris Tausanovitch
Associate Professor and Vice Chair for Undergraduate Studies