

## Summary of recent Wofford racism accusations

Dear Alumni:

There has been much concern since June about false depictions of racism past and present on the Wofford campus. Spartanburg and Greenville newspapers and television have reported on the matter. This is a summary of what has happened, starting with a June 6 public statement by the English Department faculty along with the assistant dean of diversity and inclusion. It was emailed to all English majors on record, including current students as well as graduates, under a Wofford College letterhead and posted on the Wofford.edu website. Several other departments have released similar statements.

Also posted on the website is a list of 50 demands by the Wofford Anti-Racism Coalition, a student group that has organized two campus marches. The demands, which include changing the names of dormitories honoring Wofford's first three presidents because they were slaveholders are included as an addendum to this summary. NOTE: Benjamin Wofford himself also owned slaves.

Following the English Department Statement are alumni letters to the president and trustees. Three of us met with President Samhat and his cabinet and two of us with Board of Trustees Chairman Corry Oakes and Dr. Samhat. We asked for an immediate public clarification of the college's position regarding the falsehoods in the English faculty's statement but our requests have been declined.

Also below is a sampling of letters from alumni to the administration as well as classmates. Please review all these comments, share this information with as many alumni as you can, and contact President Samhat ([SamhatNH@wofford.edu](mailto:SamhatNH@wofford.edu)) and Chairman Oakes ([coakes@otodevelopment.com](mailto:coakes@otodevelopment.com)) with your thoughts and recommendations. We do not know how many other alumni are aware of the situation. Also, please let us know if you do not wish to be on our contact list.

President Samhat, his cabinet members, Chairman Oakes and others have told us the English faculty statement is at odds with the college's official position, but all have declined to publicly challenge the falsehoods. A JEDI Steering Committee appointed by the president is studying the situation — which may take up to six months to complete. We believe the college's position regarding the errant faculty statement as well as the list of student demands should be shared with all alumni immediately, but, again, those in authority have refused to do so.

Our summary of events follows. Many thanks!

Hunter Quick ('71) and Buck Brandt ('71), John Burbage ('70), Carroll Player ('60),

— June 6, 2020:

## STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD AND ENSUING PROTESTS

Dear Wofford College Department of English Alumni:

I wanted to share with you the statement below, which was written and distributed by members of the Department of English on June 6, 2020. At the end, you will find links to resources for action and information. You should also feel free to reach out to faculty if you have questions or comments. (Signed by) Dr. John Ware, chairman. Statement signed by: Taifha Alexander, assistant dean, Department of Diversity and Inclusion; and English Professors Alan Chalmers, Chris Dinkins, Natalie Grinnell, Kimberly Hall, Sally Hitchmough, Jim Neighbors, Kim Rostan, George Singleton, Carey Voeller, John Ware, Patrick Whitfill, Carol Wilson.

As faculty members who teach in the Department of English at Wofford, we write to express our collective outrage and anguish over the horrific murder of George Floyd by four Minneapolis Police officers, the recent murders of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, and the not so recent, but still salient police killings of Freddie Gray, Philando Castille, Laquan McDonald, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice — and so many others. George Floyd's death is only the most recent case in a four hundred year history of violence against Black people, other people of color and indigenous peoples in the US. We acknowledge this terrible history and see its continuing effects in, among other things, violence at the hands of federal and local law enforcement, white people weaponizing their privilege against people of color, discriminatory housing policies, massive wealth inequality, and disproportionate suffering in public health, as the current COVID-19 crisis has reinforced clearly.

We work in a context with a complex racial history. As a predominantly white institution, whose "Main" building was built by enslaved people; who educated (white) people for 110 years before admitting its first student of color; whose annual cost to attend is more than twice the average annual household income of the majority-minority city in which it has been located since 1854 and in which 45.7 percent of children live below the federal poverty level; whose tennis courts, Greek village, Senior housing, and the offices that house co-curricular high-impact practices all sit on land that was once a thriving, vibrant community of color, Wofford College has a complicated relationship with Spartanburg. We commit ourselves to acknowledging these land and labor histories in our classes and in our interactions with students, faculty, staff and the larger Spartanburg community. We believe that Wofford cannot achieve beneficial, equitable, and inclusive relationships without publicly acknowledging that racial inequity is our immediate reality, not simply our historical past. The college must facilitate healing on campus and in our community through real, measurable reparation and transformation — beginning with identifying and addressing systemic, long-term and daily practices that perpetuate white supremacy.

As scholars who work with language and literature, we are especially aware of the way words shape current events. Words are power. We recognize racism is woven into the literature we teach and the language we speak, and we are committed to addressing them in our work. For example, terms like "looters" and "rioters" are being used to undermine or discredit the current protest movement without taking into account their histories. Looting was practiced by white Europeans against Africans for centuries; what became known as American land was looted; rioting is a behavior that can be read as a powerful language to elicit real social change. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "a riot is the language of the unheard". We reject efforts that seek to restore stability and maintain the status quo over seeking justice.

We commit ourselves to developing ways of teaching that are anti-racist:

- We will ensure our syllabi promote equitable language and policies.
- We will commit to diversifying content in our courses.
- We will cultivate safe spaces in our classroom in which all who are present are affirmed.
- We will work to dismantle racist structures in classrooms on campus and in our communities.
- We will listen to and uplift voices of color.

Our concern about these events, the moment, and the cycle of racial violence on our students and colleagues at Wofford College is shared by other Wofford academic and administrative departments, including:

- Wofford College Campus Union
- Studio Art/Art History/Theater
- Sociology and Anthropology
- The Career Center at Wofford
- Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures
- Student Athlete Advisory Council

## What You Can Do Now

### Attend the “Anti-Racism Teach-In Series”

- An Autonomous Black Student Alliance (BSA) Soul Session  
Date/Time: 6/10/2020  
Details: This Wofford BSA sponsored session is for Black identifying Wofford students to support and fellowship with one another as we practice uplifting, community practices.  
Please RSVP with this link - <https://bit.ly/WocoAntiRacism101>
- Anti-Racism 101: An Anti-Racist Toolkit  
Date/Time: 6/11/2020  
Details: Are you asking yourself what can you do?? Want to support Black organizers and communities of color in their fight against racial iniquity? Are you inappropriately leaning on your friends of color to help educate you on issues of racial injustice?? Then this Anti-Racism 101 session is for you. Join Dr. Jim Neighbors, Associate Professor for the Department of English and Co-Coordinator of the African/African-American Studies Program, and Erin Keith, a Georgetown Law Grad and Policy Attorney with the Detroit Justice Center on a panel moderated by Dr. Camille Bethea, Associate Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Modern Languages Department. During this session attendees will engage in the deliberate and intentional act of decolonizing contemporary understandings of equity, inclusion and allyship to develop effective methods in disrupting systems of injustice through anti-racist behaviors and actions in attendee's daily, every day lives.  
\*Prerequisite to attend Anti-Racism 101: This session is open to all attendees with a willingness and commitment to understand that their dominate identity can be used to center and uplift marginalized voices as equal partners in disrupting racist, oppressive systems of inequity wherever present in contemporary American society.  
\*Anti-Racism Resources can be found here: [https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1BRIF2\\_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-OgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic](https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-OgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic)

*For more information, contact Taijha Alexander, Assistant Dean of Students for Diversity and Leadership Development at [alexandertn@wofford.edu](mailto:alexandertn@wofford.edu) or 864-597-4066.*

- Support [Black organizations](#).
- Refer to the [following resources](#) for additional context, history, perspectives.

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\* See complete list of Anti-Racism Coalition student demands at the end of the Summary.

## Correspondence

— June 12, 2020:

A response to the English Department's June 6 faculty statement from English majors Hunter Quick ('71), Buck Brandt ('71) and George Tyson ('72):

To the English Faculty:

As former Wofford College English majors and fervent and loyal alumni, we are compelled to respond to your letter. We were initially shocked and angered, and then dismayed, by much of what was said and implied in your letter. You correctly and crucially characterize the horrific murder of George Floyd and the earlier killings of other people of color, and we share your collective outrage and anguish. Moreover, you make essential and valid points about continued racism and economic disparities in our society. However, your statement that there are "systemic, long-term and daily practices that perpetuate white supremacy" at Wofford is offensive and simply not true. You offer no facts or other evidence to support such an accusation, and your language has insulted many alumni.

You are correct that words are "power." The Bill of Rights, the initial amendments to the U.S. Constitution, are the foundation of the individual liberties guaranteed by our democratic system of government. When the founding fathers began amending the Constitution, they considered free speech the most cherished of the individual liberties. Without free speech, they reasoned, the other liberties were only concepts that could not survive in the real world. The First Amendment is based on the concept of a "marketplace of ideas" to foster free speech. It was premised on the belief that the best test of truth is the power of an idea to be accepted in open dialogue and debate. Through criticism and dissension, the people would recognize the plausible from the implausible. The way to defeat a bad idea was with a better idea---not suppression of the bad idea. This is the bedrock of free speech.

Your statements and insinuations about Wofford's current systemic racism, as well as your broad-brushing of white people weaponizing their privilege, is hurtful, inflammatory, and seemingly devoid of any critical thinking and search for truth, the underpinnings of a liberal arts education. After calling for "beneficial, equitable, and inclusive relationships" and asking that Wofford "facilitate healing on campus and in our community," your letter attacks people who use terms such as "looters" and "rioters," when those people are describing destructive conduct that is obviously occurring. Using those terms, you say, undermines or discredits "the current protest movement without taking into account their histories." Then you justify that conduct because it was practiced by "white Europeans against Africans" in past centuries, as if that fact supports some moral imperative for violence and destruction. However, to justify looting and rioting is to support anarchy. Such advocacy does not serve "the better angels of our nature." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. may have observed that a "riot is the language of the unheard," but he certainly did not advocate rioting and looting or other forms of violence. As you well know, he preached non-violence and hoped for a time when people would be judged not on the basis of race, but instead, on the "content of their character."

During our Wofford years we fought for civil rights and against racial injustice. We marched against the Vietnam War in the first moratorium held in Spartanburg. Two of us were founding members of the Wofford Theatre Workshop, and we produced experimental and avant-garde plays meant to challenge prejudicial thinking and inequality. During that time Wofford was led by a progressive administration, which included Paul Hardin, III as its President, Joe Lesesne as the Dean of the College, and Don Welch as the Dean of Students. That administration also included an African-American educator, Bobby C. Leach, as the Assistant Dean of Students. We were part of the first Wofford Interim, in January 1968, and back then the school was in the vanguard of educational liberalism. Many in the Wofford faculty at the time, including Dr. James R. Gross, believed that President Hardin's administration produced a seismic change at Wofford and fostered genuine civil rights reform. In a speech given in later years to honor President Hardin, Dr. Gross quoted Wordsworth's reference to the French Revolution in describing that time: "Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive. But to be young was very heaven."

The times inexorably change, and Wofford today is decidedly different, both culturally and demographically, than it was 50 years ago. Ironically, it is a much more diverse institution today than it was in our time, but you seem to be implying that its racial culture has devolved. As English majors we learned much about the universality of the human condition, and life experience has taught us empirically that common sense is immutable, in spite of the forces that try to convince us that reason is not what we think it is. Although we agree that there are no doubt individual racists on campus today, and racism exists in our society, we cannot accept your premise that systemic

racism exists at Wofford. If you have proof to the contrary, let us know specifically what it is. In addition, just because we may disagree with some of the message in your letter, do not brand us as racists because we do so. Others can judge for themselves in this marketplace of ideas whether they accept or reject your views.

Over 40 years ago the ACLU went to court to defend the American Nazi party's right to hold a demonstration in Skokie, a suburban Chicago town densely populated with Holocaust survivors. In a landmark First Amendment case, the U.S. Supreme Court permitted that demonstration, as odious as its message was. As much as that decision was bitterly harmful to many, it championed free speech, which must be robust and alive if our democracy is to survive. Characterizing dissenting opinions as racist, or even banning racist speech, will not end racism. Moreover, forcing innocent people to pay for the sins of their fathers will never promote racial harmony or achieve any real higher educational or societal progress.

So, with respect to your planned future anti-racism seminars, teach-ins, and classes, will you allow for a robust and open dialogue that disagrees with your strident or more militant message for change? For those individuals who agree that racial change is necessary, but who do not agree with your proposed method of change or your view that Wofford harbors white supremacist values, will you allow them an equal voice, without shaming or intimidating them, or making them feel inferior, politically incorrect, or less highly evolved? Will they be allowed the same figurative "safe space" to formulate and articulate their views? If so, then real potential progress is possible. You have an opportunity to genuinely teach, lead, and promote critical thinking at a crucial time. Now, when the forces of divisiveness attempt to promote chaos, when, to quote Yeats, the potential for "anarchy is loosed upon the world," so that "things fall apart" and "the centre cannot hold," you can make a difference and perhaps be part of a Wofford renaissance of civil rights and educational liberalism.

Hunter C. Quick, George Brandt III and George S. Tyson

— **July 2020:**

An abbreviated response to the English faculty statement from George S. Tyson ('72):

I am writing in response to the recent letter from the English faculty and others regarding the George Floyd murder, other killings, and violence toward Black people in general. The faculty group is correct in calling on all of us to continue the work necessary to increase equality of opportunity and to address racism wherever it may be found. However, the authors pivot effortlessly and seamlessly to an indictment of Wofford as an institution whose "complex racial history" must somehow automatically make it a racist institution today, imbued with white supremacy.

I'm saddened by the overall tone of hostility toward Wofford. Clearly Wofford is not the enemy. A significant opportunity might have been lost by alienating many people in the Wofford community. Many who might become active supporters could turn away because of the vituperative attacks on an institution they hold dear.

Wofford is not a bastion of white supremacy. This is a major theme of the letter, offered without evidence. It simply is not true. The letter also perpetuates the urban myth of the "thriving, vibrant community of color" where part of Wofford's campus now stands, implying the destruction of this idyllic community by a rapacious, expansionist institution. This is a misreading of the history and a racist accusation itself. Also, the *selective* use of words and historical facts is not becoming to an accomplished group of academicians. For example, the origins of the act of looting by raiders and conquerors is lost in the mists and myths of human history. The Vikings certainly developed quite a reputation, well before white Europeans had any interaction with Africa. The looting of Euro-Celtic civilizations by the Romans did not justify "looting .... practiced by white Europeans against Africans for centuries." Nor does it justify the looting and destruction of (often African-American owned) businesses to honor the memory of George Floyd.

Slavery was an abomination, the ramifications of which permeate every facet of our society and culture today. Yes, Old Main was built using slave labor. Wofford does not hide from that fact. Prospective student-athletes,

touring campus when recruited, are told the story. They also are told of the classes they may take about the history and the cultural and economic legacies of slavery.

This accuses Wofford of every possible racial sin of omission and commission of the 20th century. Wofford actually has a great deal of which to be proud in its history of race relations. Highlights include:

— Wofford students participated in sit-ins, marches, and other acts of civil disobedience. Wofford was the first independent college in S.C. to integrate, and the first to have an African-American member of the Board of Trustees.

— A major focus of the Vietnam War Teach-in held on campus in Spring 1971 was the racist nature of the war and the disproportionate burden borne by young Black men.

— Wofford supported the founding of Africa University in Zimbabwe by the United Methodist Church, and our faculty were given extra sabbatical time to teach there.

— Most economically diverse college in S.C. (70th nationally), according to the NY Times.

— Two Wofford alumni each made significant contributions — one the single largest gift — to the International African-American Museum in Charleston.

— The Northside project will bring Wofford directly into the Spartanburg community.

The leadership of Paul Hardin III and Joe Lesesne and their administrations cannot be overstated. They led the College through difficult times, but also quietly provided leadership for the broader community as well. Current efforts to increase the diversity of the student body are based on a foundation they built and will be the legacy of Dr. Samhat's presidency.

A half century ago, the battle for free speech on the American campus was fought. The result at Wofford was a campus open to speakers with widely divergent points of view as well as a faculty and student body that engaged in vigorous discussion within the classroom and beyond. This atmosphere has extended to the present day and must be preserved. A curriculum driven single-mindedly by the precepts described in the English faculty letter is typical of academic progressives elsewhere, and has the potential to become antithetical to true freedom of speech. Moreover, I am concerned that individual faculty members are being pressured into signing various statements. Others may be afraid to voice an opinion which differs from the prevailing orthodoxy. If this "cancel culture" arises, it will threaten the essence of true liberal arts education, society's best hope for dealing with our current problems. This must not be allowed to occur at Wofford.

George S. Tyson, MD.

— **Sept. 16, 2020:**

Letter from Hunter Quick ('71) to Nayef Samhat:

Nayef:

I hope that all is going well with you as the new year and first semester get underway. Tomorrow will be two weeks since our group met with you and your senior staff. You were going to get back with us about your administration writing and disseminating a clarification of the false and offensive factual allegations in the June 6 English Department Statement. As you know, we read the specific factual accusations that are untrue, and that we maintain are defamatory and place Wofford in a false light. These accusations of current, not merely historical, systemic racism at Wofford, such as the charge of "long-term and daily practices" on campus "that perpetuate white supremacy" and the "cycle of racial violence on our students and colleagues,"

are damaging to Wofford's reputation and will likely have profoundly negative consequences to the school's fundraising and recruitment efforts. Many alumni/ae will lose interest in Wofford.

You and the rest of your staff agreed that there was no evidence to support these accusations, did not believe them, and you told us that the factual inaccuracies in the Statement did not represent Wofford's official position. We asked for an English department retraction of those allegations, but you told us you didn't want to seek such a retraction. I suggested a clarification by the administration to set the record straight, renounce the language that was factually not true, and in so doing, articulate Wofford's official position. Our group even offered to assist in drafting that clarification. You told me that you would seriously consider our request and get back with us. Since we have not heard back from you by now, I assume that you have decided not to issue the clarification.

So that alumni/ae and other interested individuals can discern Wofford's official position on this Statement, it is now necessary to bring this matter up with the Board of Trustees and have the Board announce that position. As such, I ask that you take the steps necessary to have me included on the agenda of the October Board meeting so that I can make a presentation to the Board on this matter. Since time is of the essence, please let me know by Friday whether you will help get me on this agenda. If I have not heard back from you by then, we will need to pursue other avenues to bring this before the Board at the October meeting.

As always, thank you for your help and interest in what we are doing to help Wofford, to do the right thing, and to set the record straight.

All the best,  
Hunter Quick ('71)

— **Sept. 19, 2020:**

A letter from John M. Burbage ('70):

Dear Wofford alumni:

Below is a letter sent yesterday to Wofford's trustees requesting that Hunter Quick ('71) be allowed to address the board during its October meeting. We asked the college president and cabinet to place Hunter on the trustees' agenda, but our request was refused.

As you will read below, our letter lists troubling, false accusations about past, current and systemic racism on campus alleged and made public in a June 6 English faculty statement. Several concerned alumni met recently with President Samhat and his cabinet to discuss the false accusations and innuendo regarding alleged racist attitudes and activities past and present at our college. You will read below in our subsequent letter to the board of trustees our summary of what was said and the administration's responses.

John M. Burbage ('70)

— **Sept. 19, 2020:**

A letter from Hunter Quick, John Burbage, Carroll Player and Buck Brandt to the Wofford Board of Trustees:

Dear Trustees:

President Samhat and his senior staff graciously met with us earlier this month and discussed the controversial June 6 English Department statement, signed and disseminated by faculty members and others who allege rampant current, past and systemic racial inequities and discrimination at the college. The statement is attached along with a list of related student anti-racism coalition demands that have been reported in both the Spartanburg and Greenville newspapers.

Following are the statement's false charges, and we ask that each of you read them carefully:

— “Wofford cannot achieve beneficial, equitable and inclusive relationships without publicly acknowledging that racial inequality is our immediate reality, not simply our historical past. The college must facilitate healing on campus ... beginning with identifying and addressing systemic, long-term and daily practices that perpetuate white supremacy.”

— There is a “cycle of racial violence on our students and colleagues at Wofford College ... shared by other Wofford academic and administrative departments ...”

— The English Department advocates continuous volatility on campus when stating: “We reject efforts that seek to restore stability and maintain the status quo over seeking justice.”

After presenting the three aforementioned inaccuracies, we asked President Samhat for evidence to support these charges to include documents, incident reports, internal memoranda, policy statements and any other verification. No proof was provided. We asked if the faculty statement reflected the college's official position. He said it did not.

We noted that the charges give rise to causes of action for defamation and placing the untarnished honor of our venerable, private, Southern liberal arts college in a false light — two actionable claims under South Carolina law. We did so not as a threat but only to underscore the seriousness of the matter. We stressed that the falsehoods have already damaged Wofford's excellent reputation as well as its recruitment potential, and requested that they be refuted for the sake of the college now and in the future. We underscored the fact that, based on our discussions with many other Wofford graduates, the faculty's allegations and aberrant behavior have eroded interest and support of alumni and friends, and threaten financial support.

In addition, we asked what role Wofford's new assistant dean of diversity and inclusion played in formulating the faculty statement, which she was the first to sign. We asked if all the professors who signed it knew exactly what the final version said. We had been told it did not. We asked the president to explain the purpose, cost-effectiveness and results to date of the college's diversity and inclusiveness department's anti-racism classes, seminars and teach-in series regarding racial problems on and off campus. Again, we got no answer. We noted that some of the programs appear to indoctrinate students rather than encouraging them to discuss the issue openly and honestly.

Our questions were quite simple: Is the goal to teach students “how” to think, or is it “what” to think? Are the assistant dean of diversity and the English professors supposed to push political agendas and talking points on their students in class and elsewhere? We received no answers.

We asked about the student anti-racism coalition's well-publicized and puerile demands upon the college. We noted that alumni are especially concerned about a demand for a change of the names of dormitories that honor Wofford's first three presidents. We were relieved when told the anti-racism coalition does not represent

the views of most students — minority and otherwise — on campus. We asked why this had not been made public in response to recent newspaper articles about the coalition's demands. Again, no answer.

Lastly, we underscored the importance of informing the alumni about sensitive racial matters, and noted a core tenet of a Wofford College liberal arts education: To teach the importance of seeking out the truth when considering crucial matters, how to validate findings and to inspire students to do so the rest of their lives for the betterment of all people everywhere.

Now we respectfully ask the trustees to carefully consider our request to hear directly from our spokesman Hunter Quick during the October board meeting for the purpose of having him further explain our concerns, answer questions and ask the trustees to make clear Wofford College's position on this important matter. We asked both President Samhat and his staff to include Mr. Quick on the agenda, but our requests were denied.

Also, please note that we have promised fellow alumni to update them on our meeting with the administration, and we hope to tell them the trustees agree with the president and his administration staff that the English faculty statement is unfortunate and inaccurate, and it does not represent the college's official position.

### **Oct. 26, 2020:**

An abbreviated/edited letter from Carroll Player ('60) to the Board of Trustees:

It is disappointing that the voices of many Wofford College alumni are not being heard by Dr. Samhat, the administration, and the trustees regarding a request for a clarification of the insulting and unsubstantiated racial accusations by the English Department faculty that the college and its graduates harbor systemic racism and perpetuate white supremacy.

Did the English faculty not know that thousands of alumni strongly advocate racial tolerance and social justice, and many marched in civil rights protests in the past? Yet the faculty's emotional overreaction painted those alumni with a broad brush of racism. These offensive and bigoted attitudes have no place at Wofford College. If another Wofford professor had made some derogatory racist comments in the classroom or publicly, he/she would have been immediately censured or whatever else can be done to discredit a tenured faculty member.

Hunter Quick, a former president of the Wofford Alumni Executive Council, and journalist alumnus John Burbage met Oct. 12 with Dr. Samhat and Chairman Oakes, and asked the president to correct these defamatory allegations. I trust that Chairman Oakes updated you with a summary of their discussions. Mr. Quick got no assurance of any forthcoming retractions, just a request to be patient and let a new steering committee process play itself out. These alumni concerns precluded Nayef's development of a steering committee and require an immediate and simple response in the best interests of Wofford College.

It is even more disappointing that Nayef consistently refuses to make a clarification to the alumni, many of whom have supported Wofford for years. They include many of the 4,000 donors responsible for \$30 million given to the college. Only 25 percent of the alumni give to Wofford; 48 percent of the alumni and 56 percent of the students live in South Carolina. Wofford cannot afford to lose its mid-size base of donors, nor lose the respect and moral support of hundreds more alumni.

The English Department's inflammatory statement ignited this firestorm. The alumni only offered objections to defend their personal integrity. If your house is on fire, you first call the fire truck to extinguish the fire before permanent damage is done. You do not first appoint a listening committee of civil engineers

and construction experts to meet and decide how to restructure your house. If Nayef had extinguished the political flames in June, we would not be debating confrontational issues in October while the house of Wofford continues to burn.

Consider this timeline :

June 6, 2020 — English Department's Statement on Racism is released. The Statement also recommended college-sponsored videos and references on anti-racism and white supremacy.

June 16 and June 19 — Letters from alumni to the English Department, Dr. Samhat and the Trustees objecting to allegations of systemic racism within the Wofford community.

June 18 — Conquer & Prevail, Issue #23 : Dr. Samhat inserts a special section on racism and recommends even more anti-racism references.

June 30 — Wofford Anti-Racism Coalition's demands directed to Dr. Samhat, his cabinet, the Trustees and the Wofford community.

July 9 — Conquer & Prevail, Issue #25 : Dr. Samhat recommends more teach-in programs on anti-racist strategies.

July 9 — Dr. Samhat releases a message titled “A Vision for Wofford in the World” in which he announces the formation of a steering committee and lists 14 bullets for the Fall actions on anti-racism.

Why didn't Dr. Samhat remediate this crisis in June by taking a stronger leadership role and refuting the English faculty's extremist comments? He could have declared the statements to be beyond the bounds of academic freedom and offered a statement to the Wofford community that the English Department statement was not entirely factual. What did we hear from the administration ? Crickets.

Will someone please explain to the alumni why the president of Wofford College does not stand up for the alumni against the unsubstantiated allegations by the English Department? The demeaning statements by the faculty are insulting enough, but it is doubly insulting when the president ignored alumni pleas for simple clarification. With academic freedom comes academic responsibility. Nayef's silence, by default, appears to condone the egregious language of the English Department and has emboldened the faculty and the Anti-Racist Coalition to continue their radical agendas. It is interesting to note that “peaceful” student activists showed little allegiance to Wofford while issuing a profane and public verbal attack on Wofford's president.

I know an alumnus who was considering a \$100,000 gift to Wofford College, but since reading the English Department's statements and seeing the media reports about the irrational student demands, he has withdrawn his offer. His said ; “Why should I give any contributions to Wofford now and have them insult me and then spend my money hiring faculty members who are self-absorbed with a narrow minded focus on race and not on conducting fair and open classroom discussions on controversial issues?”

I am an alumnus who has truly loved and supported Wofford College for decades and believes in Wofford's mission of offering a balanced liberal arts education to this generation of students. Before I and many other alumni lose confidence in Nayef's leadership abilities to confront a crisis effectively and to be more sensitive to alumni concerns, I humbly request that the Board of Trustees instruct the President to issue a public explanation and clarification of the misleading comments from the English Department.

Sincerely,

Carroll Player, DDS ( '60 )  
Florence, SC

— **October 15, 2020:**

Letter from Hunter Quick to trustees chairman Corry Oakes:

Thank you for meeting with John Burbage and me this past Monday. We again ask that you bring before the full Board and reconsider our request for a correction/clarification of the specific false and defamatory factual allegations included in the June 6 English Department Statement. We also included those allegations in our September 18 email to Board Trustees. These allegations are:

— “We believe that Wofford cannot achieve beneficial, equitable, and inclusive relationships without publicly acknowledging that racial inequity is our immediate reality, not simply our historical past. The college must facilitate healing on campus...beginning with identifying and addressing systemic, long-term and daily practices that perpetuate white supremacy.”

— There is a “cycle of racial violence on our students and colleagues at Wofford College...shared by other Wofford academic and administrative departments... .”

— Disturbingly, the English Department also advocates continuous volatility on campus by declaring: “We reject efforts that seek to restore stability and maintain the status quo over seeking justice.”

Everyone at our meeting and at the meeting we had with Nayef and his senior staff on Sept. 3 has admitted that they don’t believe that these allegations are true. They have also agreed that there is no evidence, including documentation or facts, to support these false, offensive, insulting, and inflammatory accusations against Wofford. We have only asked that the administration correct these falsehoods by issuing a clarification through the internal channel in the same manner and to the same individuals who received the original Statement. We have asked only to set the record straight.

You expressed your reluctance to do so because setting the record straight, and thereby telling the truth, would create what you likened to a “firestorm.” Our group has struggled to understand why Nayef and the administration has refused to issue a clarification when they admit the allegations are false and they’re not Wofford’s official position. It appears from your remarks that you believe that not setting the record straight keeps the peace and has more upside to the school. In essence, you believe that exposing the lie doesn’t have as much benefit as ignoring it.

That reasoning demonstrates feckless and craven leadership. You believe that Wofford can solve the problem by simply showing prospectively how egalitarian and progressive it is, without first renouncing the lies. However, it cannot and it must first start with admitting the falsehoods. If you side with the untruths of the faculty and a couple of hundred students against the desire for truth sought by the rest of the student body and thousands of alumni, you will do a great disservice to Wofford. And, asking for the truth is not just advancing principle or being emotional, as you suggested at the meeting. In fact, setting the record straight is exercising sound judgment, demonstrating good leadership, and conducting successful business as a Trustee. You may think you’re being pragmatic now by refusing to correct the lies, but I think the long-term negative consequences of that decision will far outweigh the short-lived benefits you believe you are

achieving. Our alumni group will be around for a good while, and we will not forget this controversy. We are tenacious, as Terriers should be, and we aren't going away.

In addition, doing the right thing does not mean going to war with the English Department, as the administration querulously suggests, even though in reality that department has been at war with the school for a while by rejecting “efforts that seek to restore stability and maintain the status quo... .”

Interestingly, the anti-racist coalition is doing exactly what the English Department told them to do. Moreover, neither the coalition nor the English faculty care about the truth. They just want to erase history, rewrite it, and continue the chaos until they have the power they desire. We ask only that you excise the factual untruths noted above to set the record straight.

Therefore, we're making one last request for the administration and the Board to do the right thing, handle things internally, and set the record straight before we pursue other avenues to tell the true story. Thank you again for your time and attention.

— **Oct 14, 2020:**

Note from Wofford cabinet member David Beacham to concerned alumni:

Hello friends, and thanks for reaching out. These are challenging times all over, and at Wofford for me, maybe the most unusual time in my 43 years as a member of the administration. (Many more years like this and retirement could happen as early as tomorrow!) Y'all are my friends, and the Wofford “tent” under which we now stand is large and multi-generational.

We have concerned stakeholders, all of whom claim to love the college, screaming at us about one thing or another. Essentially in one ear we have a relatively small but very loyal band of alumni who were insulted by the English Department statement and don't want us to “cave” to what they feel are ridiculous student demands (from a small group), and in the other ear we have a relatively small band of students who think we haven't gone nearly far enough in acknowledging the past sins of college founders, etc.

Interesting stuff. Actually if we have opposites screaming in each ear and most of us are in the middle, maybe we are doing something right! Let me say ... the statement that came from the English Department DOES NOT REPRESENT THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF WOFFORD COLLEGE. It was not presented in that fashion and never should have been interpreted that way whatsoever. It may or may not represent even the official position of the English Department...it is largely a few faculty sounding off in an opinionated way.

But ultimately it is faculty doing what faculty sometimes do. We are not inclined to clobber them about this, but do wish to at least correct some of their narrative through various responses and a process now in place to bring all voices to the table to discuss issues of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in a civilized way. The process will take several months and will carefully consider all voices and viewpoints; you all will get to participate in a series of listening sessions shortly.

The Chair of the Board, Corry Oakes '89, met with Hunter Quick and John Burbage earlier this week, in advance of an upcoming Board meeting. The trustees are WELL AWARE AND WELL INFORMED about the concerns being raised by Hunter and John (and others). They are also fully aware and up to speed on the “demands” coming from the student group and the protesters of two weeks ago.

I will close by asking you all to trust the process(es) that we have in place and I wish to assure you that the college has never been in a healthier position, either financially, enrollment-wise, and in every other measurable way. The pandemic is partly to blame for some of the issues mentioned in this note, as there is a great deal of pent up anger and confusion out there...but we will make it through all of this.

Please, take a breath, lighten up, and encourage your fellow alumni to do the same. We are not one another's enemies; we are all on the same team, or we had better be! Finally, you need to have a high level of confidence in Nayef Samhat; he is uniquely qualified to lead a college like Wofford in a time such as this, and he enjoys the full-throated confidence of our trustees and of any who understand the full boundaries of the current time in which we find ourselves.

We covet your input, your prayers, and your continued support, even if that requires more patience than any of us seemingly can muster right now.

— **Oct. 26, 2020**

Note from Beacham to Hunter Quick, John Burbage and Carroll Player:

We customarily have a brief update for the campus community (faculty, staff, students) following a meeting of the Board of Trustees. I am forwarding the most recent update, sent last Friday (10/23), as it seems especially timely.

David B.

From Preident Samhat :

Dear Wofford students, staff and faculty,

The Fall 2020 meeting of the Wofford College Board of Trustees on October 16 was opened with a prayer offered by Bishop Will Willimon '68. He called upon us to remember that each member of the Wofford community is a gift — each one a part of Wofford, and Wofford a part of each. He reminded us that flawed people founded and built this college, and imperfect humans continue to nurture this place, its students and its mission. Bishop Willimon asked us to put aside our pride and nostalgia in order to gather the strength to do good and the courage to admit and correct our faults.

The prayer set the tone for a very productive meeting as the trustees had the opportunity to reflect on the events of the past summer and the current semester. Justice, diversity, equity and inclusion are values that describe the world we desire, not necessarily the one in which we live. We see in our mission as a liberal arts college the aspiration and commitment to embrace those values in the holistic preparation of our students for meaningful careers and lives of leadership and service. These elements inform citizenship and strengthen our democracy in a vital time in our nation's history.

During the board meeting we were impressed with student representatives who shared their experiences on campus this fall. They talked about adapting to coronavirus and having important conversations with their peers about racism and social justice. Dr. Jameica Byers Hill '88, professor of chemistry and chair of the department, demonstrated via Zoom what a virtual lab looks like in one committee meeting and in another talked about how the Wofford Anti-Racism Coalition's protest made her feel a new connection to her parents, who met during a civil rights protest in the 1960s. Trustees left the meeting more committed than ever to bringing together and listening to all of the college's constituents under the banner of our mutual love for Wofford College and a desire for a future focused on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

The tragic events of the summer were not singular, but rather focused new attention to an ongoing pattern of vulnerability and insecurity driven by race and inequity. The Wofford community responded with statements from several departments and programs, and its official position was expressed in my statement and the statement from the Board of Trustees. In all instances, we as a community are united in our commitment to resist the scourge of racism, hatred, bigotry and chauvinism that circulates across society, and equally united to

educate and activate our own community members through practices and programs that acknowledge a complex past while preparing for a changing future.

That complex past began even before Wofford College opened its doors in 1854. Main Building was built using enslaved laborers. The college's first three presidents owned enslaved people. These facts are part of the college's history. How we deal with those facts and how we care for our current students and the generations who will follow their footsteps to Wofford College are things our Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion steering committee will be focusing on in their listening sessions. These sessions begin November 10. A schedule will be released next week along with the first of a regular series of communications from JEDI.

We are listening. We are learning. Our JEDI strategic vision leaders also have a set of wide-ranging initiatives for change, including those developed by students of the Wofford Anti-Racism Coalition. Some have been in place in some form for several years. Others are new and aspirational in nature. All of these, along with the work outlined in the 2019 Diversity Report, are in the hands of our JEDI steering committee. Dr. Christine Dinkins and Dr. Ramon Galiñanes are leading this group of 16 with the help of our consultant, Dr. Debora Johnson-Ross '81. Their leadership is only the first step. We must all make justice, diversity, equity and inclusion our collective responsibility.

This is our commitment.

Nayef H. Samhat  
President

— **Oct. 26, 2020**

Letter from John Burbage to David Beacham:

Dear David:

You say in your message it is customary for the president to share with students, staff and faculty an update following a trustees meeting, and you have copied his official summary to a few of us who have spent much time and effort pleading with the administration to openly address the English faculty's lies and about the college, its founders, its benefactors, its current students and their parents, and thousands of alumni past and present.

Yet you, the college president and others in authority fail to inform almost 19,000 alumni through Wofford Today — the alumni magazine and primary news source — of serious problems that each graduate deserves to know about at this critical time. The president's summary says justice, diversity, equity and inclusion are values that describe the world that you, the administration and trustees desire. We feel the same way, and have made it very clear that we and other alumni who have contacted us want to be a part of the solution. But what little you and the others have done in response to our concerns seems shallow and self-serving — certainly not consistent with the time-honored Wofford Way of meeting challenges.

The president's summary says the trustees left the October meeting more committed than ever to bringing together and listening to all of the college's constituents under the banner of our mutual love for Wofford College. Yet the college's official response thus far is empty, misleading, hypocritical, dangerous and disappointing. *Intaminatis fulget honoribus?* Hardly. There is no honor in the way you are going about this.

Overzealous English professors who should know better have flat out lied about what's happening on our campus. The president, the cabinet and chairman of the board of trustees admitted to us that the faculty

statement includes charges that are false, insulting and at odds with the college's official position. Yet the falsehoods stand because those in authority make no attempt at this critical time to set the record straight.

Contrary to what a few crude and uniformed on-campus agitators say, wise men built our college on a rock-solid foundation and they deserve our continued respect. But short-sighted others have arrived some 160 years later and injected lies and half-truths into the mix, which in time grinds rock into mere sand. As we have asked repeatedly, please encourage the powers-that-be to set the record straight now before attempting to proceed along this very dangerous path. Thanks you!

John M. Burbage ('70)

## Letters from alumni:

These are representative letters from alumni. Some are attributed; some are not for privacy reasons. Other letters have also been sent to the president as well as alumni.

### **Nov. 1, 2020:**

From Dr. Richard Myers ('69):

Dear Dr. Samhat and Board of Trustees,

My name is Richard (Dickie) L. Myers. I am a 1969 graduate of Wofford with a BA in history followed by a MD from the Medical College of Georgia. I have practiced medicine for 40 years in the area of women's health. I have cared for people from all walks of life; rich, poor, white, people of color, heterosexual, lesbians, educated, uneducated, third world, and military personnel have all been patients that I have had the honor and privilege to serve.

My worldview is Christian theism. I believe there is an intelligent God who created, ordered and upholds this universe. He created mankind in His image and therefore every individual person has dignity and worth. He has given us absolute morals to live by, but we are flawed as human beings and fail in many ways. I believe strongly in the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence of equality before the law and the endowment of certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our constitution has codified these ideals into a framework of government to prevent tyranny and protect individual rights from the actual government. As we try to form a more perfect union we, the people, have made mistakes but America is not a mistake.

With the above background of who I am and what I believe there are some concerns I want to express about the rhetoric coming from Wofford's leadership and faculty on some of the cultural issues in our society.

First, there is a definite void in defining the concepts of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, equality, and liberty in the statements espoused by Wofford. We live in an Orwellian world where language manipulation is real. Words do not necessarily mean what one thinks and therefore you need to define what you mean for clarity. A few examples for explanation. Justice and equity\_\_ do you mean fairness from bias and favoritism or do you mean "guaranteeing" an equal outcome through manipulation and adjustment of certain parameters. (Reparations to achieve equal outcome) What do you mean by liberty/freedom? Is it autonomous self-law or is it the exercise of free choice within the boundaries of purpose and truth? What is truth? Is it that which conforms to reality or ones feelings or preference?

There needs to be clear definitions of words like tolerance, racism, and systemic. Racism defined as bias or prejudice against a person or people group based on skin color, ethnicity, gender, etc. is real but evidence that it is systemic, that is a feature of an entire system, nation, institution, or profession, is lacking. Systematic would be a better description as this is indicative of an organized, deliberate pattern of behavior. I am always amazed how we throw around words like system, society, and culture as if they are entities unto themselves. They are made up of flawed individuals, you and me. I am the problem, you are the problem! Racism is individual, not systemic.

Of greater concern to me is what I have read in the official statements made by 7 different departments of study at Wofford that are posted on the Wofford web site. While some accurate and valid statements have been made there are also inaccuracies, but more disturbing is the unified theme of all these statements is that of Critical Race Theory. As recent as 10/26/2020 the department of English has posted a faculty position for an Assistant Professor in New Southern Studies with at least a subfield in subjects like Critical Race Theory, Queer South, Black Feminism. Is this what Wofford education has come to? Does Wofford not care or does it actually support Critical Race Theory?

Critical Race Theory is a Marxist ideology promoting the concept of the oppressor/exploiter versus the oppressed/exploited. While originally applied to the realm of economics with the owner versus the worker this ideology has been hijacked and applied to culture through the influence of two Communist, Antonio Gramsci and Herbert Marcuse. Identity politics is at its core pitting one group against another; white against people of color, males against females, heterosexuals against homosexuals and transgender, native citizens and legal immigrants against illegals, etc. This ideology promotes to “tribalism” and creates conflict and division not unity.

Out of this comes the requirement of “accountability statements”, confessions of guilt, promise of reparations, and “anti-whatever” sensitivity training/reeducation/indoctrination. An eight billion dollar plus Diversity and Inclusion business has been born in which race baiters like Robin DiAngelo of White Fragility fame, Ibram Kendi, and Ta-Nehisi Coates have become millionaires peddling their goods. This despite many studies of anti-bias tools finding little evidence of any positive impact. (1)

References and links on the Wofford web site seem to support only these views. Where are the voices of other African American scholars like Dr. Shelby Steele, Dr. Thomas Sowell, Dr. Walter Williams, Larry Elder or Candace Owens. They don’t believe the plight of blacks is due to systemic racism or police brutality but to poor quality education and the absence of black fathers in the home. They actually have data to support this. What is Wofford doing to combat these issues? Where are their voices in the Wofford community? Their absence reveal much about Wofford’s true idea of inclusion.

The straw that broke the camel’s back for me however was the endorsement by the Physics and Philosophy departments of the Black Lives Matter Organization. This is a self-admitted Marxist organization that is anti-American, anti-family, anti-Semitic, and anti-police. Their goal is to destroy America.

For all the above reasons I am withdrawing my meager but consistent financial and emotional support from Wofford. I will no longer send money or encourage prospective students to attend a college that endorses these divisive and anti-American ideas. If the Wofford decides to get back into the business of teaching students how to think in order to find truth, beauty and goodness in this world rather than indoctrinating them with woke Marxist ideology I will reconsider my support. In the meantime I will divert my money to causes that contribute positively to society such as supporting the homeless, fighting sex-trafficking, helping battered women, and abused orphaned children.

Richard L Myers, Class of 1969

**Nov. 8, 2020:**

From Ed Venters ('69):

Dr. Samhat et.al:

I wish to add my voice to that of Dr. Myers, which he expressed in his email to the community on November 1st.

Dr. John Harrington encouraged me to "learn to perform feats of comprehension" in 1965. To this date, I have carried that advice close to my heart. He consistently refrained from sharing absolutes from his experience and made it clear that my job is to do the work and find the truth myself. My father and two of his brothers attended Wofford, the first in 1908 and he died in the First World War, the last was Louis Venters, and he graduated in 1923 in the class with Raymond Bourne. All of those men were members of various debate societies (which may have been early versions of fraternities), but the point is that the College encouraged debate!

Early in Dr. Samhat's tenure, he made several statements that reflected intolerance (with the force of the Presidency!) in extreme right wing views. I was alerted and reflected on Manchurian Candidate, but my concerns were abated when a portion of the Student Body took him to task and reminded him that his Office does not necessarily confer authority to make blanket statements for the whole College. I felt that in that case, "the College will make the Man".

Lately, I read that a philosophy professor who has read Hegel and Kant felt it his duty to limit discussion by voicing a truth about Black Lives Matter. He has no more standing to inform me on that subject than do Donald Trump and Whoopi Goldberg on coaching me about how to dress!

I fear that the College may be forgetting that it's highest good is achieved by NOT taking an official position, and that the current rush toward inclusion and leveling the field may be paid for by future graduates that are not as inquisitive as they could be.

Please tread lightly; it IS lives you are dealing with!

Ed Venters, Class of 1969.

**July 25, 2020:**

Dr. Gene W Grace ('69) to Dr. Samhat:

Dear Nayef:

I read your issue #26 and thought the letter from the Board was interesting but I did not understand the reason for it at the time. But two days ago all hell broke loose on the internet. I received a copy of the English Dept's letter to graduates of the English Department. I have since poured over the Anti-Racist Coalition email/demands, many articles from alums, videos, etc. I feel strongly that the English Department acted precipitously rather than thoughtfully.

Much of the outrage and the reactions could have been mitigated if the English and other departments had not sent the letter but rather undertook a thoughtful approach to solving the issues. I trust they did it unbeknownst to you and the Board.

It appears to me that the biggest problem you have now is dealing with those groups as well as alumni. I would not want any grandchild of mine being taught by anyone whose signature is on the letter! They are close-minded in their reaction as well as being perceived by many of us as anti-American and anti-Wofford. Would they prefer that we move the Wofford campus? Have they forgotten that we are a liberal arts school whose goal is to educate the person in a broad spectrum of ideas and opinions?

As far as the Anti-Racist Coalition, most of their demands are radical and skewed. They should be told so. One of their sources is the 1619 Project, which is a revisionist radical rewriting of actual historic facts. Bob Woodson, an esteemed Black scholar, started the 1776 Project to specifically refute the 1619 misinformation.

Nayef, we can lose some students, and we can certainly lose some faculty and administrative personnel, but we cannot lose half of our alumni. This is not about fairness. This has to be about a small group of disgruntled persons. Do we have issues upon which we could improve? YES! But we cannot cave in to radical demands which have not been thoughtfully formulated. I highly recommend forming a comprehensive study group of representatives of all of the Wofford components. I believe that your rapid response of levity would be advised.

Kindest regards,

Gene

P.S. Appeasement of radical demands is not befitting of the liberal arts community of Wofford College. This process of change takes time and thoughtfulness.

**July 25, 2020:**

From Dr. Gene Grace ('69) to the trustees:

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of Wofford College:

With all that is going on in national academia, I was hoping that this day for Wofford would never come in the way in which it has occurred. The internet is buzzing with emails, podcasts, letters and videos amongst the alumni about the present situation. Many in my class of 1969 are awaiting some response from the Board or President Samhat before responding.

I would hope that the Board would address the letter sent by the English Dept as well as the Anti-Racism Coalition. We do have a great opportunity to tell about Wofford values and the distinction of a Wofford liberal arts college education.

I have no idea if many policies of Wofford are racist but I seriously doubt it. Personally, I think the demands of the students in the Coalition can be dealt with reasonably. Most of them are juniors or seniors who have been there long enough to know that their thoughts and feelings are heard and acknowledged. What they need to understand is that respect must be mutual. Their resource list is radically biased. A liberal arts college has a responsibility to broaden the spectrum of ideas and opinions based on facts, historical context and reason. The list of resources is biased and needs to be carefully researched. The starting point should be one of drawing in the wide community of Wofford participants.

For all of the faculty members and administrators who put their names to the letter sent by the English Dept. to the widespread community of Wofford graduates..... their responsibility to the College and the students should be questioned and studied. The harm they have done to the Wofford community cannot be negotiated. Did they have the letter approved by President Samhat? by the Board of Wofford? Their letter went out before the College appointed a study committee to analyze the policies and programs of the school. Did they come before the Board and ask for a committee to study the issues? In my opinion, none of them should be instructing, advising or mentoring students when they act precipitously rather than thoughtfully. Does Wofford have room for improvement? YES! This can only happen when a well-diversified group from all areas of the college are brought together to study the options.

People in general are tired of politicians and academicians caving in to mob rule. We are not Yale nor are we Oberlin College. We are a College of great liberal arts teaching. Liberal arts is an open-ended system which encourages discussion, study and respect for various ideas and opinions.....not a demand to think in only one vein! In a community of respect which Wofford is, we can improve on the valuable education and the policies which help students of all ethnicities grow into intelligent and productive contributors to America.

I, respectfully, request that the Board formulate a strong, open-ended and comprehensive response so that Wofford can move forward in a manner which leads the way for other institutions of education.

Dr. Gene W. Grace, Class of 1969

**Aug. 26, 2020:**

From Anthony R. Davis ('69):

Dear President Samhat:

Somewhat belatedly, I write in response to the June 6 letter on race composed by members of Wofford's English Department. In my opinion, that communication was an ill-advised and unfounded insult to the traditions of Wofford. The outrage expressed by Dr. John Ware and his colleagues over prevailing race relations at Wofford and the college's historical treatment of minorities were not only unjustified, they were exaggerations of the Wofford experience. Personally, I believe that English Department's statement of indignation and its attendant demands were a function of the unlawful death of George Floyd. Accelerants in the raging fire castigating America and its history are the *New York Times*' 1619 Project and advocates of Critical Race Theory. In essence, it would appear that some of the Wofford faculty have been swept up in the emotions evident in riots, looting and property destruction all across America rather than the reality of race relations on Wofford's campus.

Stepping back a bit, it is my contention that the activists promoting racial discord throughout the country today are interested in a narrative, not facts. The elephant in the living room is that while African Americans make up only 13% of the U.S. population, they accounted for 54% of all robberies, 53% of all homicides, 44% of all weapons possession arrests and 29% of all rapes according to the FBI's 2018 Uniform Crime Report (UCR). Compared to 8.6% by whites, the UCR data indicate that 90% of all black homicides are committed by

other blacks. For African American men between the ages of 20-24, police force is responsible for just 1.6% of all deaths. During 2019, 7,300 blacks were murdered in the U.S. Of these, exactly 14 were unarmed blacks killed by police.

As an example, look at Chicago. According to the Chicago Police Department, during the first six months of 2020, 329 people were killed in that city, an increase of 34% from the same period last year. Shootings during that period rose by 42%, from 978 in 2019 to 1,384 in 2020. In the month of July alone, Chicago reported 105 homicides, a 140% increase over July 2019. Sadly with 584 shootings, July 2020 was the most violent month in Chicago in 28 years. Of the city's homicide victims this year, nearly 60% were black and the vast majority were killed by other blacks.

Yet, according to the rants of Antifa, Black Lives Matter and the echo chambers of the universally liberal main stream media, one would think homicidal attacks by police upon the black community were rampant and completely out of control.

While the outrage over racial discrimination in America is not totally without merit, it ignores the progress the country has made over the last half-century and that prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, unemployment within the African American community was at an all-time low.

The indignation some on the Wofford faculty express over race in the U.S. prompts more questions than calls for apology. To wit:

Where is the outrage over the crime occurring in our major cities? If Black Lives truly Mattered, rioters would be demanding our country address the crises of black-on-black killings and the 300,000 black babies aborted annually.

What does the wanton destruction of property and defunding of police departments across the country accomplish? Various studies reveal that the black community desires greater police presence, not less.

What has been the effect of the nearly \$30 trillion of state and federal government spending since the 1964 Civil Rights Act to improve the black community's standard of living? How much of a "helping hand" is enough?

Where does the largesse of America separate from African Americans' personal responsibility to lift themselves up?

What responsibility does the African American community bear for the fact that 70% of its children are born out of wedlock and many black males have multiple children by multiple women whom they make little or no effort to support?

Why is it that compared to 90% for whites, less than 70% of black children graduate from high school?

Why aren't Antifa and Black Lives Matter irate over teacher unions' obstinate opposition to charter schools which have proven time and again to produce superior education results relative to inner city union-controlled schools? Perhaps the wealth and income disparities blacks suffer relative to whites may have something to do with educational differences?

Why do African Americans deserve reparations when the millions of other 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrants to America from Ireland, Germany, France and other countries do not?

Why do we persist in perpetuating "hyphenated Americans"? Instead of African Americans or Latino Americans, why can't we all just be "Americans"?

Why is there so little evidence of Christian love in America? Unfortunately, we seem to have driven God out of the town square and off college campuses.

Summing up, it's my opinion that what's occurring within Wofford's English Department is "progressive group think". Rather than encouraging a "dialogue" on race, the department seeks to lecture the Wofford faculty, administration, student body and alumni on its interpretation of "racial equality". Claiming to occupy the high moral ground, these educators and other Progressives like them wish to foster a "cancel culture", establish "safe spaces" and avoid "trigger words" rather than promoting a real discussion of racial issues.

I honestly do not believe Wofford is a racist institution. I do believe it would behoove the college to support an active, on-going forum on race relations without having to "dismantle racist structures in its classrooms" as demanded by the English Department.

Could Wofford improve the manner in which racial issues are addressed? Of course, but I honestly do not think Wofford needs to offer an Anti-Racism 101 class. As Ronald Reagan said, a better alternative would be, "...to reject the idea that every time a law is broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions."

Anthony R. Davis, Class of 1969

**Oct. 31, 2020:**

From Dave Garner ('92) to alumni:

Here are all the people writing and judging the horrible wrongs throughout the history of Wofford. I don't think it's representative of a wronged faction described in the writings, but that is beside the point:

<https://www.wofford.edu/academics/majors-and-programs/english/faculty-and-staff>

There is inherent racism in the history of this entire country and it continues today. There is racism in every country on this planet. It's not just black and white. Human beings will find a reason to hate, and we are really good at doing it. I don't want to see it dissolve into a question of racism on either side. That is not the question, and that question will never be resolved. If one states, "I'm not racist and neither was my institution" then racism is the question, and it is one that will never be resolved.

The problem here is that a large group of highly educated people took it upon themselves to espouse the views of themselves and the school around the school's supposed systemic and inherent racism. While colleges should be an open and free exchange of ideas (the liberal arts ideal that educated all of us), the espousing of one's views or a collective's views by employees of an institution on the institution's website should not be considered unadulterated rights. I can't voice any view I deem valid at my job, and I doubt many can without repercussions. I'm not even going to question the points made in the manifesto. Right, wrong, indifferent, they do not matter. I think the issue in discussions with the leadership has been around the validity of the arguments made. The real issue is with employees of an institution putting forth such a view on either side of this belief. If a view was espoused that racism was never present at Wofford, that would be a ridiculous argument as well. The real issue is institutional control, and these views should never have been embraced on an institutionally endorsed website.

We have great leaders with wonderful intentions of achieving all the goals that we want for a Wofford graduate. I'm proud of my Wofford education and proud of those continuing to provide such education to the young men and women of this country that will do a better job of leading than I hope we have done. Every generation should hope that. Allowing employees to write whatever they believe on a "company" website and

providing implicit endorsement is not a good illustration of how to encourage these graduates to progress in the future.

But hey, the world needs poets...

There are a lot of other issues in this world more important right now than the views of a bunch of highly educated English professors and alumni who took the time to read the views of said professors. I personally am not offended by the writing itself. People can believe whatever they want. I may completely disagree on the majority of fronts, but that is not the issue. My offense centers around the apparent institutional endorsement by allowing it on Wofford's website. If this article had endorsed white supremacy by Wofford in its supposed historical interpretation by the English Department, would Wofford have endorsed it as a liberal arts prerogative? I would hope not and hope everyone would denounce it with the same visceral reaction that has been felt by this article. I hope we get past this and move on to educating young men and women at Wofford in a manner that will allow them to flourish (and not sell chemicals in paper mills like my dumb ass...). It does make me proud that we all still care enough to have this rational discussion in a manner that will be more evolved than what is indicative of political disagreements on both sides of the aisle these days.

Dave Garner, Class of 1992

### **Oct. 30, 2020:**

From Rock Amick ('83) to alumni:

With regard to the recent controversy concerning alleged racial bias and abuse at Wofford College, there can be many sides to any story. It seems to me, however, that one of two things is clear:

— Our President has been presiding over a campus-wide hotbed of racist hatred and abuse against students of color. Further, he has conducted a vast coverup during his tenure to prevent the public from learning the truth. The coverup had been successful until June when, guided by their search for the truth and an unselfish passion to end the horror, professors from the English Department bravely made public this conspiracy and declared open rebellion against the President of Wofford College and complicit alumni (*apparently, that includes every one of us living and dead*) for participating in a 160-year-long, Carolina-style pogrom against minorities past and present.

Or ...

— The President has failed in one of his most fundamental responsibilities: Lead Wofford College and protect its reputation from scurrilous and unproven allegations (*especially if they emanate from within the college itself*).

Neither scenario paints our President in a glowing light. My confidence in him is shaken. Is the idea to “heal and repair” our college and absolve us of our sins, both past and present, by metaphorically burning it to the ground? In the face of such a ruinous attack, courageous leadership is needed, not quiet acquiescence.

I am willing to give the President the benefit of the doubt provided he is indeed committed to uncovering the facts. To that end, we should start by making public internal investigations conducted by the college disclosing on-going racism and especially violence against students and others.

Show us disciplinary actions taken against students and others guilty of such transgressions. What are the allegations from those who have been harmed (*anonymously, if need be*)? Ask the campus, city and county police departments as well as local prosecutors to make public and bring to trial any and all Wofford College

students as well as employees who have participated in illegal racist acts of violence and/or intimidation on campus. If the English faculty's screed claiming rampant violence, widespread racist hatred and systemic, institutional racism is to be believed, surely there are hundreds of cases to be made. Let us hear them and deal with them rationally.

Every Wofford student should feel safe, valued and respected. They are members of our close-knit, caring college family. If this is not happening, we need to know about it and we need to fix it.

As an individual observer, it has become quite clear there is a growing sickness at our beloved college. One way or the other, we must all be dutiful in diagnosing and curing it.

With warmest regards,

Rock Amick, Class of 1983

**Nov. 8, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

Re: The Woke Ideology of Wofford College

My father was on the Wofford Board of Trustees in the 60s. He would be heartbroken to witness this sorry Woke state of affairs. In my advancing years I have had to part ways with the Woke NBA and NFL and now, sadly it looks like Wofford is next. Where are the Winston Churchills the JFKs and Ronald Reagan's. Hello George Orwell.

**Nov. 9, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

I have a friend whose daughter recently transferred from Wofford to USC because she was extremely upset with the ultra-liberal socialist agenda at Wofford. I will also discontinue my financial support until changes are made. Where are Paul Hardin, Joe Lesesne and Bernie Dunlap when we need them?

— **Nov. 9, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

I stopped my monthly bank draft last year due to Wofford's liberal actions and "Wokeness." Samhat and the recent Board have destroyed this great institution. Today's Wofford students are taught what to think, not how to think on their own. Such a shame.

— **Nov. 9, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

Thank you, my donations will go to a more deserving organization in the future. This is very sad for all of us who love Wofford. What else can we do to eliminate this crisis and restore pride and honor and normalcy? Let's keep fighting.

— **Nov. 10, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

For those of us with Wofford in our wills and trusts, perhaps it is time to review our choices.

— **Nov. 12, 2020:**

An email to alumni (author's name withheld):

The JEDI Steering Committee's vision helped shape my vision to omit WOFFORD from my will. I am so sorry and heartbroken to have to do this. I am still hopeful The Board will rectify the questionable leadership.

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## **Addendum:**

### **\* Student anti-racism coalition demands:**

#### **Statement of Purpose:**

Black students especially, but also Indigenous and other students of color (BIPOC), have historically faced institutional, structural and personal racism and prejudice at Wofford College and within the college community. These problems continue today. Concerns expressed by BIPOC to college leadership repeatedly fall on deaf ears and result in inaction. A statement is not enough -- we demand that Wofford admit and address the anti-Black history that has led to systemic racism, oppression, and egregious lack of representation -- and then take the necessary steps to correct it.

This document encompasses what we envision to create a more just and equitable Wofford. The testimonies at the bottom of this document are not singular stories. They are the daily stories of Black and students of color on this campus. Our institution is currently failing BIPOC students in such blatant ways that many regret choosing to attend Wofford. Meeting these demands not only benefits us, as students, but you, as administrators of the College. Until these demands are met, Wofford is not a place that we would recommend BIPOC students attend.

We call on President Samhat, the Board of Trustees, The President's Cabinet, and the Wofford community past and present to implement the demands listed below. This is an opportunity to go further than a reiteration of Wofford's commitment to diversity. This is an opportunity to listen to what your students are telling you and to take meaningful action.

1. We feel that faculty, administration, and staff who have been discriminatory or racist have not been appropriately disciplined. Therefore, we have a lack of trust in a fair and just administration and related policies. As it currently stands, we believe that the college's policy on bias-incidents does not do enough to reprimand violations on behalf of tenured faculty. Repeated cases have only resulted in meetings with the faculty member and very little or meaningless reparations.

2. We feel that the college exclusively relies on the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to address matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion, when the mission should be shared by all college leaders, departments, and employees.

3. We feel that all faculty and staff who engage with students need anti-racist and anti-bias training. Currently, the responsibility of teaching anti-racism courses and discussions repeatedly fall on the same departments, specifically Sociology/Anthropology and English.

4. We feel that there needs to be more courses and modules across all disciplines that teach the legacy of racial violence and discrimination. Furthermore, we believe all Wofford students should graduate knowing about Wofford's, the region's, and our nation's history of race and racism.

5. We believe that not teaching students about the injustices BIPOC face as a result of systemic racism and structural violence (e.g. colonialism, slavery, segregation, urban renewal, etc.) is an erasure of history that reproduces white supremacy.

6. We feel that it is a failure on behalf of the entire College environment that our percentage of BIPOC students falls below regional and national demographics, comparatively: <https://www.wofford.edu/Wofford.edu/Documents/Diversity-and-Inclusion/DiversityReport.pdf>

7. We feel that it is a failure on behalf of the entire College environment that our percentage of all minority students falls at 19% or 333 students as of Fall 2019, when national population trends are more than double that percentage. (<https://www.wofford.edu/about/fast-facts>; <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225218>)

8. We feel that the percentage of BIPOC in the faculty, professional staff, and administration should, at least, be comparable to the percentage of BIPOC students. (<https://www.wofford.edu/Wofford.edu/Documents/Diversity-and-Inclusion/DiversityReport.pdf>).

9. We feel that the demographics of the college leadership -- the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet -- do not reflect the diversity that Wofford should be striving to have at all levels: leaders, employees, and students.

10. We feel that it is inappropriate to have buildings on campus named after Carlisle, Shipp, and Wightman who all owned enslaved people. It is unacceptable and disrespectful to force students to reside in buildings named after people who did not believe in the humanity of Black people.

11. We feel that having only one room on the entire campus named after Black people does not adequately represent the contributions that the Black community has had at Wofford. The Gray-Jones room is in a remote location and many students rarely visit this room nor do they know the history of its namesake. We feel that Gray's and Jones's accomplishments as the first Black students at Wofford should be better acknowledged.

12. We feel that the "Back of the College" memorial, as well as the small brick 'dedication' to the enslaved builders of Main, are placed in obscure or hidden locations so as to render them practically invisible. We believe the histories of the once thriving Black community and the lives of the enslaved builders of Main should be displayed prominently.

13. We feel that double standards exist on Wofford's campus as it relates to NPHC Fraternities and white fraternities. While white fraternities are open for social gatherings weekend after weekend, NPHC fraternities face significant deterrents placed by Wofford administration to hosting social events on campus. NPHC organizations are subject to administrative policies that grant permission for parties only every 3 months or so.

14. We feel that there is a lack of understanding about the significance of having the Divine Nine organizations on Wofford's campus and why the presence of all of the Divine Nine organizations on campus would be essential to creating a more positive and welcoming space for Black and Brown students. NPHC organizations not only help create a family among students, they provide diversity to the school as well. Wofford's vision has diversity and inclusion in the forefront; however, there are no NPHC sororities on campus and there is a pattern of organizations being present on campus then disappearing because of sustainability issues.

15. We feel as if there is a significant lack of support from the administration and faculty for the effort of inviting NPHC organizations onto campus. We understand the challenges these organizations face in deciding to commit to Wofford. But we feel Wofford administration needs to be much more deliberate and vocal about its commitment to welcoming them here.

16. We feel that Wofford's Greek life is notoriously exclusionary and members discriminate against non-white students; we feel that this behavior is unacceptable and must be addressed.

Short term demands to be achieved within the next academic year (2020-2021):

17. We demand that Wofford hire an independent external consultant to assess the racial climate at Wofford and provide recommendations for the college to become antiracist.

18. We demand that policies and procedures for reporting bias incidents be reviewed, especially as it relates to processes for tenured faculty.

19. We demand that all administrators, faculty, staff and advisors be required to take at least annual anti-racist and anti-bias training.

20. We demand that the President's Cabinet take anti-bias and anti-racism training annually.

21. We demand that the Board of Trustees take anti-bias and anti-racism training annually.

22. We demand that Campus Safety take specific police-oriented anti-bias and anti-racism continuing education, with specific requirements in the form of hours or courses that must be completed every semester.

23. We demand that the Offices of Marketing and Communication and Admission/Financial Aid receive education on tokenism and actively recruit BIPOC in hiring processes. We demand that both offices, which are critical to the recruitment and retention of BIPOC students, receive anti-bias and anti-racism training.

24. We demand that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion's overall budget and staff be expanded to include four (4) professional, full-time staff members.

25. We demand that a student Bias-Response Council, similar to the judicial or honor council, be added to the bias-incident response team process. We demand that this council should be involved in the adjudication of any bias incident report, whether it be student, faculty, or staff.

26. We demand that specific, transparent and thoroughly communicated remedies for racist, discriminatory or exclusionist behavior by faculty be established. Any faculty who violate their responsibility to their students or Wofford's code of conduct be subject to a disciplinary process that results in measurable improvement in their behavior. This

disciplinary process could be staggered based on the number and/or severity of offenses so that those who demonstrate a pattern of behavior or create an unsafe learning environment can be adequately reprimanded.

27. We demand that at least four full class periods of FYI course instruction be devoted to Wofford's racial history, and that substantial anti-racism and anti-bias education be incorporated into FYI curriculum.

28. We demand that the Wofford Ambassador program hires BIPOC students at a rate that represents regional racial trends, provides all Ambassadors anti-bias and anti-racist training, and instructs all Ambassadors in Wofford's exclusionist/racist and Back of the College history to be incorporated into all campus tours.

29. We demand that the AMS/NPHC House be renamed to better represent the Black students and provide them with a space that is their own, just as the IFC and Panhellenic chapters have. We demand that this house be reserved specifically for WWC, WMC, BSA, and NPHC organizations.

30. We demand equitable treatment of all organizations that occupy houses at the Greek Village on behalf of the Office of Campus Life and Student Development and administration.

31. We demand that a new policy or procedure be implemented outside of a bias incident report that would fine Greek and other organizations for excluding non-white students at their social functions. Additionally, we demand mandatory anti-racism and anti-bias training at least annually for all members of IFC & Panhellenic organizations.

32. We demand positions be added to the IFC and Panhellenic Council to specifically address diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, we demand that every individual Greek organization appoint a similar position or committee within their chapter to work towards anti-racism.

33. We demand that Albert Gray '71 and Douglas Jones '69 be properly honored for being the first African-American students to enroll and graduate, respectively, by each becoming namesakes of their own building on campus. Buildings or names in their honor should be located central to active student life.

34. We demand that Janice B. Means '73 be properly honored for becoming the first African-American woman to graduate from Wofford by becoming the namesake of her own building, central and active to student life, on campus.

35. We demand that the names of offensively named buildings -- Carlisle, Shipp, and Wightman -- be changed. (Name suggestions: Gray Hall, Jones Hall, Means Hall).

36. We demand that the Back of the College memorial be moved to a more prominent location on campus.

37. We demand that the memorial to the enslaved builders of Old Main be moved to a more prominent location in Old Main.

38. We demand that at least one-third of all future hires for professional staff and full-time faculty be of color.

Long-term demands -- to be achieved by the 2021-2022 academic year:

39. We demand the College publicly acknowledge its shameful history regarding racism and its relationship to the African American community in Spartanburg, as well as the Indigenous peoples whose land this once was. We suggest that a land and labor history of Wofford be stated at every formal college occasion, including acknowledging: former presidents Carlisle, Shipp, and Wightman owned slaves; the Black neighborhood's demolition to make way for new construction, including the Jerry Richardson Indoor stadium and the Greek Village; the Cherokee / Tsalaguwetiyei and Catawba people who once lived where Wofford is now located; use of enslaved people's labor to build the college.

40. We demand that a Chief Diversity Officer or a Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion be created as a cabinet-level position. We demand the addition of four General Education requirement courses that address race relations, racial inequities, racial history, etc. Examples may include any of the courses under the African/African American Studies (AAAS) program.

41. We demand that existing academic departments develop their course curriculum by inserting issues of diversity and racial justice into existing courses.

42. We demand that there is a coordinating position created for someone who is qualified to cater to the sustainability of NPHC organizations.

43. We demand at least one anti-racism course be added to all academic departments (for example, a course on the Racial Wealth Equity Gap could be offered in the Finance dept.) and be consistently taught by professors who are qualified to do so.

Ongoing: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225218>; <https://www.wofford.edu/about/fast-facts>

44. We demand that the percentage of Black students reflect national population trends, which stand at 13.4%, or 230 Black students as of Fall 2019 data.

45. We demand that the percentage of all students of color reflect national population trends, which stand at 41.8%, or 719 students of color as of Fall 2019 data.

46. We demand that the percentage of Black full-time teaching faculty reflect national population trends, which stand at 13.4% or 19 faculty as of Fall 2019 data.

47. We demand that the percentage of full-time teaching faculty of color reflect national population trends, which stand at 41.8% or 61 faculty as of Fall 2019 data.

48. We demand that the college leadership follow suit with the previous demands in increasing BIPOC members on the Board of Trustees and the President's Cabinet.

49. We demand the implementation of a two-year post-doc fellowship program that has 10 open positions every academic year to attract young scholars to gain professional experience at Wofford and expand the faculty's understanding of what a scholar looks like.

50. We demand all organizations within The Divine Nine be rechartered or chartered by 2025. The Divine Nine consist of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi (already chartered), Omega Psi Phi Fraternity

(already chartered), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (previously chartered, needs to be rechartered), Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this list of Grievances and Demands, please do not hesitate in reaching out to us at [coalitionwofford@gmail.com](mailto:coalitionwofford@gmail.com)

Signed: Bali Channa '20, Bryson Coleman '21, Omar K. Elmore '20, Jurnee Jones '21, Margaret Roach '21, Destiny Shippy '22, Naya Taylor '21.

The Wofford Anti-Racism Coalition is a group of students that self-organized after the current Wofford College President, Dr. Nayef Samhat, penned an ambiguously indirect message to the entire Wofford Community that left Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and our allies feeling unheard, unimportant, misrepresented, and angry because the message failed to call out or directly address centuries of police brutality, white supremacy, or systemic oppression and the ways those mechanisms operate on Wofford's campus. Our original plan was to create an email template for any member of the Wofford community to utilize to email President Samhat and College Leadership in disdain of the original, tepid statement. Following President Samhat's second message that was more successful at articulating a message of anti-racism at Wofford, we decided our time and efforts would be directed towards requesting actions that address the anti-Black history at Wofford that has led to systemic racism, oppression, and egregious lack of representation. The Grievances & Demands we published are the product of that work, and what we envision to be a more just and racially equitable Wofford.