

Carleton

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To all our physics and astronomy students,

Like many of you, I have been rocked by the events of this past week. As a Black person, watching the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer, combined with the the repeated acts of violence against Black bodies by white people is more than just painful. I weep because of fear for my brothers who have both been stopped multiple times by police because they were black. One even had a SWAT Team called on him. As a Black *woman*, this is much less likely to happen to me, but I must suppress this dread every day as it impacts the Black men in my life that I love and care about.

I do physics because I love it. (For those of you who know my story, you know that I didn't discover that love until after I graduated with my degree from Kenyon.) But potentially like many of you, the reason I majored in physics was because I thought that subjects like physics and math were insulated from the bias and inequality that other subjects must wrestle with. I have never seen a Black or African American physics, math, chemistry, CS, etc. class, like you might in history, anthropology, political science, philosophy, etc. Certainly issues of race and bias don't show up in Newtonian Mechanics, Optics, Quantum Mechanics, and Astronomy, right?!

If you have taken A&N from me, because of an assignment that runs through the entire term, you are already aware that physics and astronomy is not immune to the systemic racial, gender, and other biases that exist in the broader society. Biases show up in: which physicists make it into the textbook and which ones don't, who gets funded and who doesn't, who gets recognized and who doesn't, what high schools have access to a physics class and which ones don't, who gets called on in class and who doesn't, who has authority in the classroom and who doesn't, ALL of these issues fundamentally impact diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within the physics community. We are not immune!

As chair for the next couple of years, one of my goals is to work with my colleagues to not only to think about the curriculum and how best to serve the students through what is taught in classes and labs, but also to weave DEI throughout the curriculum and departmental events so that everyone is forced to grapple with and celebrate all aspects of what it means to be a physicist in a global community. To this end, I have submitted a proposal to be a part of the American Physical Society (APS) Inclusion Diversity Equity Alliance (IDEA) Network with a group of 14 other faculty, staff, and students. The goal of this group is to bring all departmental stakeholders together to address (i.e, actually do something about) DEI in our department. Regardless of whether our proposal is accepted and we get access to the conferences and resources afforded by the broader APS alliance, this group will happen. No matter your gender, race, religion, or creed, if you want to be a part of this, it is not too late! Please send me an email (mbaylor) and I will add you to the list. I will make a call again in the fall, which is when we will really start working on this. We would especially welcome current first-year student voices and white male student voices, which are currently absent from the team. This is not a problem for only women and minorities to address; it is important for everyone.

As you prepare to finish out the term, I wish you the best of luck on your final projects, papers, and exams. That said, if you need to talk, please reach out to me, other students, faculty, or staff. We are eager to support you.

Best,
Marty

