

## POLICY PROPOSAL: AN ANTI-RACIST WEST POINT

To West Point leadership, the Long Gray Line, and the citizens we serve to protect:

This is a call to action.

The United States Military Academy has not taken the necessary strides towards uprooting the racism that saturates its history. We are calling upon West Point and its leadership to redress three major failures:

1. Systemic racism continues to exist at West Point.
2. Anti-racism is not part of the curriculum at West Point.
3. The conditions for an anti-racist space are not present at West Point.

By failing in these areas, West Point ultimately fails to produce leaders of character equipped to lead diverse organizations. In other words, West Point is failing to accomplish its mission.

We believe West Point has an opportunity to lead the way for the military and the Nation by proving its aims towards “eradicating racism,” as the Superintendent wrote to the West Point community on June 4th, 2020. This can be accomplished by committing to measurable, anti-racist policies and systems which would address these overarching failures.

This policy proposal is a compilation of firsthand experiences and calls to action from members of the Long Gray Line, highlighting the necessary action steps for fighting racism and normalizing anti-racism at the Academy. We encourage you to read this proposal in its entirety in order to understand the prevalence of racism at the Academy and our vision for its elimination. Though we are deeply disturbed, we hold fast to the hope that our Alma Mater will take the necessary steps to champion the values it espouses. **Now is the time for action.**

Very Respectfully,

David Bindon	USMA '19: First Captain, Valedictorian, Marshall Scholar
Simone Askew	USMA '18: First Captain, Rhodes Scholar
Joy Schaeffer	USMA '18: Valedictorian, Marshall Scholar, Stamps Scholar, B1 Commander
Tony Smith	USMA '19: Class President, Dep. Brigade Commander, Men's Rugby Captain
Care Kehn	USMA '18: Brigade Respect Captain, Fulbright Scholar
Jack Lowe	USMA '19: Brigade Respect Captain, Fulbright Scholar
Netteange Monaus	USMA '18: Regimental Respect Captain, Schwarzman Scholar
Ashley Salgado	USMA '19: Truman Scholar, Stamps Scholar, H1 First Sergeant
Maria Blom	USMA '18: Battalion Commander, Crew Team Captain

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### SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

#### Section 1: An End to Systemic Racism

1. Release an updated statement that explicitly acknowledges the existence of anti-Black racism endemic to West Point, declares racism's deleterious impacts on the experiences and leadership development of Black Cadets, and states that Black lives matter.
2. Release a statement that establishes a zero-tolerance policy for racism at West Point, outlines the actions that leadership will take to dismantle racism and normalize anti-racism, and designates completion dates and points of contact for each action.
3. Release individual statements from prominent white leaders at the Academy (e.g., the Dean, Commandant, and Brigade Tactical Officer) acknowledging how their white privilege sustains systems of racism, explaining the role they will play as an ally in destroying the norm of white supremacy, and mandating their subordinates to have these conversations with their units.
4. Publish an aggregated, anonymized account of all Equal Opportunity claims and determinations to the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity and to the Academy leadership over the past twenty years.
5. Begin publishing all brigade command climate survey results, including those from the past twenty years.

#### Section 2: An Anti-Racist Education

1. Commit West Point's leadership development program to help Cadets unlearn racism and be allies in pursuit of an anti-racist and anti-bias society.<sup>1</sup>
2. Create a core academic class on the intersection between race, ethnicity, gender, and class that every Cadet is required to take.<sup>2</sup>
3. Establish a full-time PhD-level Diversity and Inclusion Chair.
4. Hold annual Diversity and Inclusion training sessions at the start of each academic year to prepare Cadets and faculty for the upcoming school year.
5. Hold anti-racism character training sessions once each semester with qualified instructors. Provide dedicated time for Cadets to prepare for these sessions.
6. Require a comprehensive review of all courses to ensure the inclusion of Black, Latinx, and other marginalized people in the authorship and production of course materials, course literature, and other course content.
7. Require that humanities and social science courses add classes, blocks, and lessons of instruction dedicated to teaching the history and writings of marginalized people. Require each course director to prove there are no Black scholars in their spaces if they choose to reference none and publish these proofs to the public on West Point's website.
8. Educate Cadets and faculty on appropriate and necessary political awareness and participation, and on proper social discourse in these matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Anti-bias refers to the combination of anti-racist and anti-sexist policies.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C for a previously proposed example of a course on this topic.

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### Section 3: An Anti-Racist Institution

1. Publish an annual report on diversity, inclusion, racism, and anti-racism at West Point, providing detailed statistics on retention at the Academy, faculty and Tactical Department composition, updates on anti-racism initiatives, anonymized Equal Opportunity claims and determinations throughout each year, command climate survey results, and trends within each of the previously listed categories.
2. End all financially discriminatory policies at West Point, including the forfeiture of pay mechanism used as a disciplinary measure for Cadets.
3. Establish an independent anti-racism advisory committee composed of subject-matter experts on racism and other forms of oppression. This committee must be able to operate free of institutional influence or fear of retribution from West Point and the Department of Defense.
4. Investigate the Cadet disciplinary system for racially discriminatory punishments and codify a means of preventing this in the future.
5. Invest in spaces that protect and nurture Black Cadets' identities.
6. Invest in spaces that will allow other minority groups to thrive, so groups do not have to vie for already scarce resources.
7. Conduct a thorough investigation of West Point's donor practices and the influence donors have at a federally funded public institution, in order to ensure that organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who have previously contributed to white supremacist ideals at West Point, do not have the power to do so.
8. Hire more rotating and permanent Black faculty as Tactical Officers, instructors, department heads, and coaches, and demonstrate how West Point will diversify their recruitment.
9. Remove all names, monuments, and art honoring or venerating Confederate figures. Establish a commission on whether to contextualize or remove other problematic relics of slavery, the Confederacy, and white supremacy.

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### INTRODUCTION

We write this call to action from a place of deep concern. In this proposal, we speak to not only the dire need for courageous, honorable leadership, but also propose ways we can embody the values we claim to hold.

The central and guiding principles of the United States Military Academy (USMA) can be found in our mission statement: to educate, train, and inspire leaders of character committed to and prepared for professional excellence and service to this Nation. If we are truly inculcating these principles, implementing anti-racist policies is integral to this effort. Radical inclusion coupled with a foundation of anti-racism,<sup>3</sup> particularly in a nation founded and built upon white supremacy, cannot be an afterthought; it must be the lens through which the Academy executes all of its aims.

This proposal takes inspiration from the “Black Manifesto” written by Black Cadets in September 1971 in response to President Nixon’s proposal to build a Confederate monument at the Academy. The document listed thirteen grievances demanding “equality, respect, and understanding” from the Academy where they experienced “a long train of abuses and usurpations” and “blatant racism.” The manifesto not only resulted in the termination of a proposal to build a Confederate memorial, but also garnered support for a hop that invited Black women from surrounding civilian colleges, the dedication of Buffalo Soldier Field to the historically Black 9th and 10th Cavalry, the prohibition of Confederate flags in Cadet rooms, the cessation of the West Point band’s playing of Dixie, the organization of a charity concert—featuring Stevie Wonder and the Supremes—to raise \$41,000 for sickle cell anemia research, the implementation of a Black History Week celebration, the revitalization of the Race Relations/Equal Opportunity Office, and the requirement for eight hours of mandatory race relations training to Cadets and sixteen hours for staff and faculty.<sup>4</sup>

However, this movement ebbed in the 1980s as the entry of women into the Academy shifted focus to address the sexism that was rife within the Corps.<sup>5</sup> This focal shift demonstrated West Point's reactive nature when it comes to addressing simultaneous and intersectional discriminations—this reactivity persists today. Despite progress on both the issues of racism and sexism, these changes are inadequate. We are confident that it is possible for West Point to pursue and implement lasting changes such as those successfully implemented through the Black Manifesto. Therefore, we seek to describe our vision for an anti-racist Academy in this proposal.

Both of West Point’s initial statements in response to the Black Lives Matter movement attempted to address racism by calling upon Soldiers to treat every person with dignity and respect, but failed to sufficiently mention or define racism. Far too often, we have witnessed the outcome of

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Anti-racism Digital Library, “Anti-racism can be defined as some form of focused and sustained action, which includes inter-cultural, inter-faith, multi-lingual and inter-abled (i.e. differently abled) communities with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects.”

<sup>4</sup> Seidule, “From Slavery to Black Power,” in *Intolerance: Political Animals and Their Prey*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Robert E. Tully, (Lanham: Hamilton, 2017), 82-83.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

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addressing racial violence with such inconsequential calls to action that are directed only at individuals. In April 2019, we experienced insidious attempts to remove one of the few systems in place at West Point to combat racism, sexism, and homophobia: the Respect Committee. Some of the architects leading this dismantling effort still work at West Point today.

As an institution, we are emerging from an unfavorable legacy of systemic racism, harmful exclusion, and overt white supremacy. However, the current Superintendent has said that there is no systemic racism at West Point, despite West Point's racist history and the personal statements of many Cadets who have experienced it firsthand.<sup>6</sup> Until there is an institutional acknowledgment and reconciliation with this past that continues to manifest in the Academy's present, undoing these foundational inequities and mitigating persistent harms will be impossible.

We respond to Secretary Esper's request on June 18th, 2020, for the Pentagon to "immediately present actionable ideas that the Department can begin implementing now," to ensure that the military leads the way as it "embraces diversity and inclusion, and rejects hate, bigotry, and unlawful discrimination in all forms." On June 25th, he extended this request to the entire military force, asking us to "have the hard conversations with [our] leadership." This is our attempt to do so: we have written the attached proposal containing action steps West Point can take to lead the effort as an anti-racist institution.

Though we are aware that the Academy leadership is currently developing a strategy toward these ends, these plans do not mention race, racism, or anti-racism. Therefore, such efforts sidestep the primary enemies: racism and white supremacy. West Point has demonstrated an inability to meaningfully discuss race and a tendency to silence such conversations when grassroots efforts attempt to start them.<sup>7</sup> Not only should we be concerned that West Point graduates arrive at their units unprepared to have conversations about race, we should also be concerned that West Point's inability to do so means that it is far easier for racist beliefs to be maintained through the Academy, to the extent that West Point graduates are tying nooses and joking they be used on their Black peers.<sup>8</sup>

In our time as Cadets, two Superintendents have championed diversity and inclusion. And still, overt experiences of racism—like those placed throughout this document—and more insidious forms of racism continue to persist. The Academy must acknowledge that racism is the enemy, even if we overcome a lack of diversity. Increasing Black representation without holistically addressing racism only causes more suffering for Black people.

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Vanden Brook and Michael Collins, "Trump heads to West Point amid tension with top military brass and a nation whipsawed by racial tension," *USAToday*, June 12, 2020, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/06/12/trump-west-point-speech-comes-amid-military-racial-tension/5283283002/>.

<sup>7</sup> When a cadet started the #ITooAmWestPoint social media campaign to educate people on common microaggressions, West Point encouraged the cadet not to release the photos in fear that they would be seen as too "political." Aaron Morrison, "Exclusive: These Alums Want West Point to Have an Honest Conversation About Race," *Mic*, May 18, 2016, <https://www.mic.com/articles/143693/these-alums-want-west-point-to-have-an-honest-conversation-about-race>.

<sup>8</sup> Jozlyn A. McCaw, "A Noose in our Army," *WordPress*, June 23, 2020, <https://eyesofthebird.wordpress.com/2020/06/23/a-noose-in-the-army/>.

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Therefore, we have written the attached document containing a list of action steps to build an anti-racist West Point. Among these action steps, we offer ways that various existing teams within USMA, such as the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (ODIEO), could be improved. We want to be very clear: this proposal is not for those teams. We believe that these teams would make the necessary changes if given the authority and vision to do so. Rather, this is directed toward the Academy's leadership who have the power to make the necessary changes—changes that will empower ODIEO and all entities at West Point to work together to be anti-racist.

It seems the military often considers conservative perspectives—such as “America First,” pro-gun sentiment, and Confederate veneration—as culturally permissible, while the topic of race—especially when presented by people of color—is called out as overly partisan. We implore you to consider this tendency and not dismiss this proposal as a partisan statement. Though our recommended actions carry applicability in eradicating many forms of bias and discrimination at West Point, such as sexism, ableism, fatphobia, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism, the remainder of this proposal will focus on addressing anti-Black racism as a first step on a long journey—a journey toward an anti-racist West Point. This proposal was sent via email to Academy leadership on June 25, 2020.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The content of this email is included in Appendix A.

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### SECTION 1: AN END TO SYSTEMIC RACISM

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2. Release a statement that establishes a zero-tolerance policy for racism at West Point, outlines the actions that leadership will take to dismantle racism and normalize anti-racism, and designates completion dates and points of contact for each action.
3. Release individual statements from prominent white leaders at the Academy (e.g., the Dean, Commandant, and Brigade Tactical Officer) acknowledging how their white privilege sustains systems of racism, explaining the role they will play as an ally in destroying the norm of white supremacy, and mandating their subordinates to have these conversations with their units.
4. Publish an aggregated, anonymized account of all Equal Opportunity claims and determinations to the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity and to the Academy leadership over the past twenty years.
5. Publish all brigade command climate survey results each year, including those from the past twenty years.

#### **Narrative: The Endemic of Anti-Blackness, by Simone Askew**

It was 2018 and just two weeks after I had been selected for the role of First Captain of West Point, becoming the first Black woman to hold the position.

It was late, and I was headed to my room. There waiting for me was a small, white note, inserted underneath my door. I opened the folded page, which bore no signature. Inside was a picture of me holding a rifle, photoshopped with a monkey's face over my own.

Though I was aware of the historical precedence of portraying Black people as monkeys, I wondered if the depiction suggested something deeper about my leadership. Racing through my mind were all the presentations and conversations that I had given in the past 14 days as First Captain and whether I had made any mistakes. This self-interrogation fueled in me a paralyzing fear.

I feared if others knew how deeply such an image impacted me that I would be told—as Black Cadets and Officers are often told—that this was not the first nor would it be the last time that I would experience racism, so I had better get used to it. Even worse, they would deem me as too emotional, dramatic, self-centered, weak, and “always making it about race.”

My strategy, instead, was to perform flawlessly. After receiving a Rhodes Scholarship, I was optimistic that I had finally done enough. My efforts, at last, would prove my humanity to the anonymous artist—and to the entire Corps of Cadets.

However, more racist caricatures and comments continued to circulate online. One of the popular images even depicted me as Satan himself.

Am I an animal, am I a demon, or am I human?

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Officers would frequently come up to me and say, “you really seem to be getting a lot of backlash,” with no acknowledgment of the racism and sexism that were so evidently wrong. Exposure to such harm and the inaction that followed from Academy leaders sent a clear message to me at the age of 20. At best, it suggested such mockeries were an inherent part of the job. At worst, it suggested people really did see me in the ways the pictures portrayed.

The Academy’s perception of me as a Black woman becomes less clear when we interrogate the men and legacies that West Point immortalizes on our campus. In tolerating these symbols, West Point calls into doubt any claims to valuing Blackness or womanhood.

It is essential to consider how this story is just one of many and minimally traumatizing when compared to the stories my Black brothers and sisters have shared. Perhaps the most concerning conclusion one can draw from these testimonies is that if a young Black woman who is paraded by

“I was called a ‘nigger’ during my plebe year. When I reported it to my Tactical Officer, they instead accused me of lying and initiated an honor investigation against me.”

The testimonies throughout this document were provided by Cadets in a 2020 survey. All testimonies are compiled in Appendix B.

the Academy as a model to follow is dually a victim of just racially gendered harm, one can deduce the egregious nature of the experiences of Cadets the Academy does not parade for the public.

If this is the treatment the Academy believed that I deserved as the highest ranking Cadet and a Rhodes scholarship recipient, imagine how the Academy treats my Black classmates

who have yet to achieve such nominal success! While institutional achievement will never fully shield us from the racial violence pervasive at West Point, I worry every day about those who have yet to acquire those illusive shields of “success” against the brutal violence they encounter.

To be sure, West Point has come a long way. I know this as well as anyone, as my experience is only possible because of decades of efforts towards progress, as well as the careers of trailblazing Black women who came before me. Nevertheless, the reverence that West Point holds for racist figures is antithetical to the claims it makes about the next generation of Army leaders. Dually, a sustained unwillingness to acknowledge the pervasive and systemic racism at West Point means that there is no ability to protect Black Cadets from the irreversible harm of racial violence.

We say that we want more Black Cadets and Officers, but we refuse to acknowledge the racial tax that they must pay just to survive. We place a few Black people into leadership positions, but we will not acknowledge that the dehumanizing backlash they receive is racism. We publicly parade the “firsts” of our institution but use them as a façade to avoid committing in word or action to anti-racism.

This duplicity undermines our dearly held mission and makes adherence to Duty, Honor, or Country impossible. There is no hope for the development of character in a space where Black women are

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seen as monkeys, where traitorous slave owners are the celebrated heroes we choose to immortalize, and where our commitment to anti-racism is nonexistent. If Black lives truly do not matter to the military—then that should be known. And if they do, then that ought to be undoubtedly clear, as well.

### Call to Action: Take the First Step

We find the two statements released by USMA on June 4th, 2020—ten days after George Floyd’s murder—woefully inadequate in offering a clear stance on the Black Lives Matter protests throughout the world. The first response was an Instagram post with a caption copying the exact words made by the Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Army, and Sergeant Major of the Army the day prior.<sup>10</sup> The second response was a more formal public statement, which also offered no clear stance on the issue.<sup>11</sup> More poignantly, the lack of a statement from prominent white leaders at the Academy continues the historical silence of leaders regarding racial violence and injustice. There was no commitment to anti-racism or stance against white supremacy. Rather, USMA social media accounts were posting about graduation and National Running Day, reaffirming the callousness and insensitivity with which West Point treats anti-Black racism.<sup>12</sup>

As the Chief of Staff of the Army noted in a Twitter video posted on June 5th, public statements are just the beginning, and action must follow. We agree. Nonetheless, we find West Point’s initial statements inadequate—harmful, even, because they illuminate that whenever a strong stance against racism is needed, the Academy’s leadership chooses to take passive stances that do not properly define the issue or lead to

measurable action. When will our leadership learn that simply asking Soldiers to treat every person with dignity and respect will not uproot the racism deeply embedded in the Army’s history?

Given the shortcomings of any public statement provided by West Point or the Army thus far, we call on the Academy to release an updated statement that explicitly establishes a zero-tolerance policy for racism and states that Black lives matter. It should also outline the concrete actions that will be undertaken to eradicate racism and normalize anti-racism at West Point, including all the actions

“I was called a ‘nigger’ during my freshman year at West Point. I was told that I was going to rob someone because I was Black. A student made a noose and put it on his Black roommate’s desk as a joke. I was called ‘white’ because I speak intelligently, which is built on the assumption that white people speak better than Black people.”

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<sup>10</sup> US Military Academy-West Point. “Gripping Hands.” *Instagram*, June 5, 2020. Accessed June 5, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBCFhRCDFbw/>

<sup>11</sup> US Military Academy-West Point. “A message from our Superintendent.” *Instagram*, June 5, 2020. Accessed June 5, 2020. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CBDda3mjL5n/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CBDda3mjL5n/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

<sup>12</sup> US Military Academy-West Point. “National Running Day.” *Instagram*, June 3, 2020. Accessed June 3, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-VFrMnPJF/?igshid=1oza759x1xoc0>

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contained in this proposal, designating who is accountable for each action and when it is expected to be completed. We ask that white senior leaders specifically acknowledge their vital role in destroying the norm of white supremacy at the Academy.

This failure to acknowledge racism and white supremacy runs throughout the Army. Lieutenant Maria Blom—USMA Class of 2018, Engineer platoon leader, and co-signer of this proposal—captured the sentiment of this silence, saying:

Until the publication of the Army’s tri-signed letter regarding civil unrest on June 3rd, 2020, it seemed that leaders at all levels were hesitant to make a statement about current events or bring up the issue of race with me, my peers, and most importantly, our Soldiers. I was consuming news, podcasts, and articles, left to myself to digest the content. It was infuriating to me that the military community was ignoring this. Silence from leadership is deafening. This can’t be made into “check the box” training. These conversations must come from leaders demonstrating true care for their subordinates.

As a New Cadet, I memorized West Point’s definition of a leader of character: “Sir/Ma’am, a leader of character seeks to discover the truth, decide what is right, and demonstrate the character and commitment to act accordingly.” We, as members of the Long Gray Line and leaders produced by West Point, are asking that the Academy implement and practice the values and standards we preach.

America and the world are watching and waiting for leadership. The first step is to recognize and take responsibility for this problem. We are convinced our Alma Mater is the institution most capable of teaching people from all corners of America and the world to acknowledge, unlearn, and address systemic racism. No one thinks they are part of the problem. And that is the problem. We must teach Cadets and future Officers to be anti-racist and to be part of the solution.

“Someone put the letter ‘N’ in one anonymous post online, and then another user put up the letter ‘I’, until the word ‘Nigger’ was spelled out by six different users. I anonymously commented how ridiculous this was. I was then told that I was being a ‘pussy’ and a ‘sensitive bitch.’ From that point on, I realized just how alone I truly am and how much of a racist problem West Point has but refuses to admit to.”

### Call to Action: Zero-Tolerance Policy for Racism

The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (ODIEO) purports to be “the focal point for West Point Diversity and Inclusion outreach, initiatives, projects, and plans.”<sup>13</sup> However,

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<sup>13</sup> United States Military Academy. Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity, <https://www.westpoint.edu/about/west-point-staff/office-of-diversity>.

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since its inception in 2014, it has focused most of its energy outside USMA, except for the West Point Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Conference, which remains, to a certain degree, performative. Furthermore, it has neglected to collect or provide any public data regarding the institutional culture towards diversity and retention.

“An old grad made a racist ‘joke’ to Cadets, who were primarily Black and Hispanic, saying that they probably got their exercise by breaking into houses. When I told him I did not understand nor did I find his joke funny, he walked away.”

Therefore, we are calling for a complete account of all equal opportunity claims and determinations submitted to ODIEO and to Academy leadership over the past twenty years. Additionally, we request

they provide all command climate survey results, formal and informal, from the past twenty years. The results of the command climate surveys are published by the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC) Equal Opportunity Representative annually and shared internally at USMA. While there is no doubt the data has been collected and reviewed, there is serious doubt that adequate redresses have been made. Without these data points there is no foundation to prove West Point’s commitment to seriously investigating racist incidents and upholding a zero-tolerance policy for racism in the future. The lack of action exacerbates distrust between Academy leaders and Black cadets who courageously relive their trauma by sharing their painful experiences. Finally, the lack of such a foundation renders impossible any collaboration between current programs or a framework for independent oversight.

“One day I sat with a group of white males in my company during dinner. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was coming up. One of them mentioned how his teacher made him feel ‘guilty’ about being white because of the oppression their ancestors put upon minority Americans for hundreds of years. The Cadet explained how he should not feel guilty because he was not the one that caused the pain.

I mentioned how it is important to recognize the privilege young, white, straight, Christian males reap due to the power dynamic white men have created in American society. Once I said those words, I was suddenly being shouted at by every white male at that table. I was being told that I was ‘crazy and racist,’ that ‘African Americans should do the same because of affirmative action,’ and ‘You’re only saying that because you’re Black.’”

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### SECTION 2: AN ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

1. Commit West Point's leadership development program to help Cadets unlearn racism and be allies in pursuit of an anti-racist and anti-bias society.<sup>14</sup>
2. Create a core academic class on the intersection between race, ethnicity, gender, and class that every Cadet is required to take.<sup>15</sup>
3. Establish a full-time PhD-level Diversity and Inclusion Chair.
4. Hold annual Diversity and Inclusion training sessions at the start of each academic year to prepare Cadets and faculty for the upcoming school year.
5. Hold anti-racism character training sessions once each semester with qualified instructors. Provide dedicated time for Cadets to prepare for these sessions.
6. Require a comprehensive review of all courses to ensure the inclusion of Black, Latinx, and other marginalized people in the authorship and production of course materials, course literature, and other course content.
7. Require that humanities and social science courses add classes, blocks, and lessons of instruction dedicated to teaching the history and writings of marginalized people. Require each course director to prove there are no Black scholars in their spaces if they choose to reference none and publish these proofs to the public on West Point's website.
8. Educate Cadets and faculty on appropriate and necessary political awareness and participation, and on proper social discourse in these matters.

#### **Narrative: West Point Fails to Teach Anti-Racism, by Joy Schaeffer**

The extent to which West Point fails to prepare white Cadets to understand racism and white supremacy is acutely evident in my experience there as a white woman. Although I graduated as the valedictorian of my class, I left woefully unprepared to create inclusive environments in future diverse teams.

I graduated having learned about the importance of diversity and inclusion, but never about the difference between them. I thought simply having people of many backgrounds was enough to satisfy both. I didn't understand the effort required as a leader to ensure that Black service members feel valued, included, and heard, without having to minimize their Blackness.

I graduated without an understanding of how racism differs from prejudice, or the extent to which racism is exacerbated by systems of power.

I graduated without an understanding of how I could still be racist, despite my best intentions and the fact that I have always espoused the equality of all people.

I graduated with a degree in history without understanding the straight line that runs directly from slavery through sharecropping, lynching, mass incarceration, and police brutality.

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<sup>14</sup> Anti-bias refers to the combination of anti-racist and anti-sexist policies.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix C for a previously proposed example of a course on this topic.

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I graduated celebrating “how far we’ve come” instead of recognizing “how far we have to go.”

I graduated knowing that my whiteness is a culture, but still oblivious to the ways in which it structures my interactions with people of color.

I graduated without an understanding of how to identify and call out microaggressions, and that my silence in the wake of them enables greater acts of racism.

I graduated without an understanding of how to sensitively engage in discussions about the discrimination experienced by Black people in the Army.

I graduated understanding the concept of white privilege, but not about the specific ways in which it actively and passively contributes to the continued marginalization of people of color.

I graduated with an expectation that Black people should educate me on racial matters, without knowledge of how this sense of entitlement to Black labor is premised on my white privilege.

I graduated having learned about the historic “white man’s burden,” but without uprooting my own white savior complex.

I graduated aware of implicit biases, but not of how they contribute directly to the same systemic racism that killed George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and too many others.

I graduated without ever hearing the term “anti-racism.”

West Point—with its constant calls for “diversity and inclusion,” and its celebration of the role of the Army in ending slavery and segregation—did not do enough to actively reveal and root out the

“During the first few days of practice for the NCAA swim team, a white friend was discussing romantic interest in other Cadets. She went out of her way to comment that she would never date a Black Cadet because ‘their skin feels disgusting’ to her.”

white supremacy that inevitably lies within me as a white person in the United States. Even despite its Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity. Even despite the many training events on professional ethics and character and team building and trust. Even as a history major who took a class about the history of race. While being a history major certainly did take sandpaper to the boulder of my

white supremacy, that is something that many other white Cadets never received. The work that West Point does to uproot racism in comparison to what Cadets require to be anti-racist is utterly insufficient.

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I recognize that the responsibility of education in anti-racism falls on me as an individual. While I own this personal failure, I would ask: Does West Point, as the preeminent leadership institution, believe it is acceptable to allow their white graduates to fail in this way, while doing nothing to uproot white supremacy in the Army's future leaders?

West Point will continue to fail every member of the Army if it does not begin to educate its future leaders on their responsibility not only to avoid overt and covert racism but to be actively anti-racist. What the current moment has shown us is that the norm in white America is racism and the supremacy of white citizens over Black citizens. Therefore, West Point must commit to unlearning racism, learning how to identify racism on the individual and systemic level, equipping Cadets to be allies, and making an inclusive space for Black Cadets in a pursuit of an anti-racist society.

I have a long way to go. The United States has a long way to go. Will West Point lead the way?

### Call to Action: Intentionally Anti-Racist Curriculum

While the United States Military Academy considers itself an institution dedicated to commissioning leaders of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, and Country, the current education system does not bring this mission to fruition. Being a “leader of character” requires unlearning racism in all its forms and actively opposing all types of injustice. Yet, since 1802, West Point has graduated “leaders of character” who hold racist beliefs and refuse to stand up to injustice. West Point was not created for minorities or women, but for white men, so all development towards diversity that fails to acknowledge the continued systemic disparities is piecemeal. Furthermore, the overt messaging that the Army “does not see color” refuses to acknowledge the very real experiences of Black cadets who live with the effects of discrimination and prejudice.

This colorblindness manifests itself in the core curriculum and renders whiteness the default. The Army values, without an anti-racist foundation, are not enough to ensure that Black cadets are treated with respect. Not only do staff and faculty often not understand or validate the

“I received A’s for my military development grades, an A for my summer training grade, and even the Recondo badge for successfully completing many training tasks. Military performance has always been my strongest pillar. It therefore surprised me when my squad leader told me my force distributed grade for the detail. He said he would have graded me higher if I had done more to be part of the group. When I asked for examples, he cited my lack of interest in country music or my failure to try dipping tobacco during summer training. When I asked my other squad mates, I learned that they received comments that were tangible: not carrying their share of weight, having a bad attitude, and failing to follow orders. I performed well, but because I did not share the same cultural appreciation for dipping or country music, I did not receive the grade I deserved.”

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experiences of Black Cadets, but they rarely bring in diverse perspectives in their core curriculum and teachings, demonstrating that the Army does not acknowledge or honor the contributions of marginalized communities. This passive decision sends a message to both Black and non-Black Cadets alike—a message that says the value of Black work in academia and in the Army is not respected or, even worse, is non-existent.

USMA defines its success in diversity and inclusion quite naively: a steady increase in the intake of Black Cadets. It adopts the victories of Black Cadets as their own success stories when in actuality the journey to their achievements was carved in an environment that actively quieted and invalidated Black identities. Their success is not a result of the Academy's commitment to diversity, but rather of Black Cadets' ability to persevere despite the racism they experience and the minimal support they receive from USMA. West Point preaches a message of welcoming diversity without understanding how to actually teach inclusivity and equity. Thus, its messaging inherently includes a refusal to name the problem of racism and limits the effectiveness of its strategic efforts. Therefore, the retention rate of Black Cadets remains stunted despite overt recruitment efforts. Diversity must start with a zero-tolerance policy for racism that extends into the teaching of character building.

Without a clear anti-racist stance in its proposed strategies, USMA directly sets itself up for failure in its programs and education. There is no better current example than the “USMA Diversity and Inclusion Plan (2020-2025)” which fails to even mention the word “racism,” though it mentions

“[One of our cadet leaders] would often talk about only one demographic attending the Prep School because we—Black Cadet candidates—did not have the academic ability to succeed at West Point. He pointed out our inferiority and lack of intellectual abilities compared to his. He added that the closest that we, as Black Cadets, would get to his GPA was in the physical pillar.”

“diversity” 146 times. Similarly, the “2020 USCC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Strategy” defines racism once, but lacks any direct conversation of its manifestations, thereby clearly ignoring this complex issue in favor of lighter fare. While West Point's key leaders profess to value diversity and support inclusion, their statements are haphazard, ill-defined, and reactionary rather than proactive, which—for military

officers and academic professionals of their caliber—demonstrates a lack of interest rather than competence. These strategies will not provide lasting impact because they fail to accurately describe the issues they purport to resolve.

While we understand that USMA has several functional components dedicated to enhancing diversity in the Corps of Cadets, these have been historically under-supported, insufficient, and lacking any conceptual awareness of systemic racism—a trend that continues today. This proposal will briefly touch on both strategic and practical implementations of USMA's current position on diversity and inclusion.

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In review of the current programs dedicated to diversity matters at USMA, there are five internal initiatives staffed by military Officers and civilian professors:

- The Diversity Subcommittee of the Faculty Council
- The Dean's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellow
- Task Force Teamwork
- The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (ODIEO)
- The Admissions Diversity Outreach Office

The Diversity Subcommittee of the Faculty Council has no supervision and is made up of faculty that volunteer to discuss issues that impact Cadet development across the ethnic, religious, and gendered realms, while occasionally bringing up the need for diverse faculty and integrating diversity in classroom teaching to the Dean. In 2020, the Dean selected one Officer for the part-time role of the Dean's Diversity and Inclusion Fellow to analyze all the diversity efforts in West Point's academic curriculum based on the 2017 Dean's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. One faculty member overlooking the entire Dean's strategy is an insufficient attempt to better the program.

Meanwhile, in 2019, Task Force Teamwork—a group composed of a few USMA department heads—developed a grassroots strategy to synchronize USMA departments and directorates to effectively recruit a more diverse military faculty and staff. ODIEO and the Admissions Diversity Outreach Office focus most of their efforts on recruiting people of color into West Point and currently do little to further anti-racism inside the Academy. The people in these offices, many of them people of color themselves, truly care about Black cadets and do what they can to support them. However, USMA leadership directs the efforts of these offices outward rather than on building inclusivity and addressing racism within the Corps. ODIEO could serve a key purpose as an accountability mechanism for all the work towards diversity inside the Academy, while providing needed oversight for specific, anti-racist reforms. However, to take on this task, USMA must ensure that ODIEO is properly staffed and resourced to constructively support this work.

While West Point seemingly has a multitude of efforts to champion the cause of diversity and inclusion, it must be wary of taking a performative stance rather than making structural change. The presence of many understaffed, underfunded, and uncoordinated efforts only underscores a superficial and ineffective attempt to appear diverse, without doing the real work of anti-racism. The initiatives inside and outside West Point must come together to concentrate their efforts towards creating and supporting an anti-racist curriculum at West Point. We are calling on these groups to increase diverse perspectives in current curricula, increase the number of Black faculty in academic and military leadership, and create a character development program with anti-racism as one of its tenets.

In order to help Cadets unlearn racism and normalize anti-racism, the following initiatives must be put into place:

1. **Require the addition of a core academic course** entitled, "Contemporary Social Issues" focused on the intersection of race, class, gender, and leadership. While the Diversity and Inclusion Studies Minor does create more courses to instruct students on topics of race,

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gender, and other minority groups, its voluntary nature makes its content self-selective to the students already concerned about these issues. The fact that the majority of Cadets are able to opt out of these courses means that many Cadets complete West Point's academic program without seriously interrogating the critical role race, class, and gender play in leading Soldiers. This course should be held by the Department of Behavioral Sciences & Leadership, and the syllabus created by members of the Diversity & Inclusion Studies Minor Curriculum Committee and the Sociology Department Faculty.

2. **Establish a full-time PhD-level position for a Diversity and Inclusion Chair.** This position should be filled with a new hire, not added to the responsibilities of a current instructor. This position must be fully funded and given full administrative support to oversee the implementation of the changes in curriculum and character education outlined in this action plan.
3. **Commit to holding annual diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism training events** each year during the first week of each term for cadets and faculty. These training events should be held by an external organization which specializes in doing anti-racism in corporate workplace and higher education settings. ODIEO and the Cadet Respect Committee should be responsible for choosing and partnering with this external organization as a way to avoid the heavy initial burden of writing an anti-racism education plan from scratch, as well as being able to easily find and use best practices already in place across the country. Task Force Teamwork should be a part of this partnership to craft diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism training for all Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and civilians in faculty and staff roles in every department across the four pillars.
4. **Ensure continued anti-racism training events.** These should not be a one-time event, but a cornerstone of the leader development and character training all cadets must receive. These training events should be the part of yearlong conversations about anti-racism outside of the academic setting. There must be dedicated time allotted to allow cadets to review materials in preparation for these discussions.
5. **Require a comprehensive review of all required courses** to ensure the inclusion of Black, Latinx, and other people of color in the authorship and production of course materials, course literature, and other course content. This project is perfectly suited for the Diversity Subcommittee of the Faculty Council and the Diversity & Inclusion Studies Minor Curriculum Committee. Members of each academic department should require equal representation in authorship and course material in all of their course syllabi. This review must principally take aim at core courses and each major's required courses. West Point must create courses in all departments that promote a better understanding of inequalities and racism.
6. **Require that humanities and social science courses add lessons and blocks of instruction dedicated to teaching the history and writings of marginalized people.** This includes discussing not only Black history, but the history of Latinx, Asian, and other ethnic identity groups in this country. This includes discussing the history and impact of

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colonization on countries across the world and the United States' role in imperialism. These lessons must center the work of marginalized groups to ensure their experiences are accurately understood by students. Require each course director to publish proofs that there are no Black scholars in their spaces if they choose to reference none.

### Call to Action: Eliminate Empty Commitments to Diversity and Inclusion

The language stating that USMA leaders will “fully commit to diversity and inclusion principles” and make all “feel included as equal members” of the West Point community is nothing new. Under the care of leaders who claimed to prioritize diversity, conversations about race were removed from the Cadet Character Education Program, and the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic (SCPME) formally proposed eliminating the Cadet Respect Committee. West Point’s decision to deconstruct the Respect Committee should stand as a cautionary tale that leaders can claim to commit to the mission of diversity and inclusion while simultaneously taking action to harm it.

The dismantling of the Respect Committee—formed to address racism, sexism, and other injustices in the Corps—and SCPME’s inability to see racism as an issue inside West Point show the institution’s ineffective attitude toward teaching essential values of anti-racism, respect, and honor to the Corps of Cadets writ large. In April 2019, Colonel Scott Halstead, the Director of SCPME, made a formal recommendation to the Commandant of Cadets to completely disband the Respect Committee. Both Colonel Halstead and his deputy, Dr. Peterson, stated that the Respect Committee was not worth the Academy’s funding nor its Officers’ time. Colonel Halstead justified this by saying he believed that the majority of cadets would reach an adequate level of tolerance on their own to qualify as a “leader of character” and any remaining racist cadets could be disciplined individually. Dr. Peterson stated that he believed Respect-led conversations about racism and sexism increased division and cynicism in the Corps, completely ignoring the division caused by real harm to all Cadets. These beliefs and subsequent actions from leaders in SCPME clearly demonstrate the inability to understand and address injustices within the Corps.

“Just last week, an instructor sent out a class survey and asked Cadets to identify themselves by race. Among the races available was the word ‘Negro’. I can’t even begin to explain how this makes me feel as a Black Cadet who has invested so much time and effort into becoming a member of the Long Gray Line.”

As a result of these actions, the Respect Committee was a powerless and symbolic initiative during the 2019-2020 school year. It was overseen by Officers who questioned its existence and formally called for its removal. During the current watershed moment, as cadets create racist social media videos and the movement for Black liberation sweeps the world, the institutional neglect of racism has left West Point unable to protect its Black Cadets or demonstrate meaningful solidarity in the conversation being had across the country. These previous failures only further illuminate the need for West Point to be specifically anti-racist in its Diversity and Inclusion policies moving forward.

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### Narrative: Leading Marginalized Soldiers in a Diverse Army, by Ashley Salgado

I am a leader of 33 Soldiers, 87% of them people of color and 51% of them Black. In this role, it is essential that I am capable of having conversations with them about our Nation's history of racism, especially given the ongoing movement. In the days following the killing of George Floyd and the resulting protests, I realized just how unprepared I was to have conversations about this with my

“I was standing in formation the morning after the 2016 presidential election. A senior in my company was talking about how excited he was that President Trump won, fist pumping and cheering, ‘Yes! Finally, a white man is back in power!’”

Soldiers. I had received plenty of instruction on how to brief an operations order or occupy a patrol base, but West Point failed to train me on how to have important conversations about race within a diverse Army.

Given this lack of experience, I looked to my Commander for guidance on how to address recent events in our formation. Though his remarks were genuine, they closed the conversation to any further

discussion. He urged our Soldiers to remember the uniform they wear, as if to insinuate that they had to mute their voices because of the U.S. Army insignia on our chests. Officers that do not continually engage with Soldiers on this topic set a poor example for junior leaders. It is vitally important that, as a West Point graduate, educated and trained at the world's preeminent leadership institution, I am able to take disciplined initiative and have these tough conversations. If Lieutenants are too uncertain and do not act, the onus falls on the people of color in our formation, therefore reinforcing existing systems of oppression.

While the Academy boasts about its character program and curriculum, meant to teach Cadets how to build diverse teams based on mutual trust and understanding, what happens after we are thrust into those diverse teams? How are we fostering that trust? It is not enough to simply instruct Cadets to treat others with dignity and respect. Academy leadership must acknowledge and actively demonstrate that racism, both subtle and explicit, will not be tolerated. West Point must explicitly address racism if it intends to actually train Cadets for all aspects of leadership.

I was alarmed to hear my company's leadership telling my Soldiers that, given the uniform they wear, they should not speak out against the racism currently on display in our country. I was frustrated by their unwillingness to acknowledge that service members have the right to exercise the freedoms they defend to the fullest extent possible. While at West Point, Cadets are often told that Officers are the moral compass of the Army. Therefore, Cadets and Officers alike must not be silenced. Rather, they must be leaders of character that speak out clearly and directly against injustice and immorality.

### Call to Action: Educate Cadets on Political Awareness and Participation

Part of West Point's mission to create commissioned leaders of character includes an obligation to educate future Officers on how to appropriately participate in social discourse. Furthermore, Officers must know and educate their Soldiers on the exact regulations that outline what is and is not permitted with regard to political activity. When faced with leadership that may, inadvertently,

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perpetuate misinformation about how Soldiers can react to issues of racism, prejudice, and discrimination, it is essential that Lieutenants have the knowledge base to combat this as some of the most direct leaders in the Army.

It is crucial to note that Department of Defense and Army regulations prohibit leaders from demonstrating “conduct that, if allowed to proceed unchecked, would destroy the effectiveness of his or her unit.”<sup>16</sup> Racism unequivocally destroys the effectiveness of all units. The DoD's guidance also allows service members to participate in demonstrations so long as the person is off duty and not in uniform, and the events are not likely to result in violence.<sup>17</sup> While, in light of recent events, some Army leaders may use the possibility of violence as an excuse to bar all participation in demonstrations, it is necessary that

“I’ve heard instructors comment that ‘braids and curly hair aren’t professional’ which targets minorities born with naturally curly hair or wear braids to protect their hair from breakage.”

West Point prepares us to challenge those notions and ensure that Soldiers are not misled with regard to their rights as U.S. citizens, regardless of their military status. The Department of Defense further states that policy and procedures on prohibited activities must be included in pre-commissioning training and professional military education.<sup>18</sup> One core course on American Politics is insufficient, and the content taught in this course is overly cautious. West Point's failure, likewise, to address the murder of George Floyd in a timely manner does not model proper leadership in this regard. Failing to directly educate Cadets on their specific rights to freedom of expression demonstrates the negligence of Academy leadership to prepare leaders to confront and dismantle racism in the Army and in America.

One example of doctrinal education is Department of Defense Directive 1344.10, which lists political activities that active duty service members may engage in, provided that such activity is non-partisan nor seen as an endorsement by the Army, Department of Defense, or U.S. government.<sup>19</sup> Active duty service members retain the right to sign petitions, write letters to editors and newspapers expressing personal views on public issues or political candidates, and make monetary contributions to political organizations. When in doubt, it is always safe to preface any article, post, or statement by affirming that the views expressed by the service member are not the views of the Army or Department of Defense. Service members, more simply, must not act as if they are speaking on behalf of the military or their branch of service. West Point actively fails to provide even this basic

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Instruction 1325.06, 2012, 1. <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive 1344.10, 2008. <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/134410p.pdf>

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education, and discourages political awareness or engagement that inflicts harm on Cadets' future Soldiers.

Reform takes work and a willingness to sit in discomfort. USMA must support leaders at the lowest level by teaching them the courage and compassion to put their character into practice. West Point must equip future officers with the tools to fight injustice by creating common ground and providing shared experience. Lip service and letters are not enough. Avoiding the issue of race because we, as individuals and as an institution, are not comfortable having that conversation perpetuates harm. The people of color within our formations are directly impacted by their leaders' failures to address shortcomings, ignorance, and in some cases, outright discriminatory acts that divide rather than unite us.

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### SECTION 3: AN ANTI-RACIST INSTITUTION

1. Publish an annual report on diversity, inclusion, racism, and anti-racism at West Point, providing detailed statistics on retention at the Academy, faculty and Tactical Department composition, updates on anti-racism initiatives, anonymized Equal Opportunity claims and determinations throughout each year, command climate survey results, and trends within each of the previously listed categories.
2. End all financially discriminatory policies at West Point, including the forfeiture of pay mechanism used as a disciplinary measure for Cadets.
3. Establish an independent anti-racism advisory committee composed of subject-matter experts on racism and other forms of oppression. This committee must be able to operate free of institutional influence or fear of retribution from West Point and the Department of Defense.
4. Investigate the Cadet disciplinary system for racially discriminatory punishments and codify a means of preventing this in the future.
5. Invest in spaces that protect and nurture Black Cadets' identities.
6. Invest in spaces that will allow other minority groups to thrive, so groups do not have to vie for already scarce resources.
7. Conduct a thorough investigation of West Point's donor practices and the influence donors have at a federally funded public institution, in order to ensure that organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who have previously contributed to white supremacist ideals at West Point, do not have the power to do so.
8. Hire more rotating and permanent Black faculty as Tactical Officers, instructors, department heads, and coaches, and demonstrate how West Point will diversify their recruitment.
9. Remove all names, monuments, and art honoring or venerating Confederate figures. Establish a commission on whether to contextualize or remove other problematic relics of slavery, the Confederacy, and white supremacy.

#### **Narrative: Disparities in Disciplinary Practices, by a Cadet in the Class of 2021**

At the end of my yearling (sophomore) year, I received a board for an alcohol-related incident. I drank a beer on an official trip to the United States Naval Academy with friends over dinner; the consumption of alcohol is not permitted for cadets on official trips. When the investigation started, I immediately confessed to drinking the beer on duty to the investigating Officer. Although I understood that my actions would lead to disciplinary measures, I did not expect to have racially discriminatory miscarriages of justice carried out against me in the disciplinary process.

After I wrote my sworn statement, I and one of the other three cadets who I was with during the incident were read our charges. The Brigade Tactical Officer (BTO) noted that I was charged with corroboration, alleging that I had spoken with other guilty parties to align my story before giving an official statement. I was startled because there was no evidence to support this allegation. The only person who admitted to corroboration was the Cadet standing beside me, the only other Cadet of color in the group of four of us who were found guilty of drinking on duty. The two other white Cadets who had also committed the same infraction at the same event received their hearings individually. I was grouped with the only other Cadet of color, who *had* turned himself in for corroboration. During the preliminary hearing, I was denied the right to read the charges against me.

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After hearing that I received walking hours,<sup>20</sup> room restriction, reduction of rank, and assignment to the Special Leadership Development Program (SLDP)—an extensive disciplinary education program—among other punishments, I asked the commissioned and enlisted Officers in charge of my company (known as a TAC team) why I was given the same punishment as the Cadet who was charged with corroboration, even though I did not corroborate and there was no evidence to support such an allegation. While they dropped the corroboration charge from my case, I still received the same punishment as the Cadet of color who corroborated rather than that of the white Cadets who committed the same offense I had. Despite initial hesitations and advice against contesting the sentencing, I moved forward in challenging the punishment.

I immediately wrote a memorandum to contest the unequal punishment I had received, more specifically noting that my walking hours should match that of one of the white Cadets who was guilty of the same charge. Additionally, I continued to work with the legal office who validated my concern over racial discrimination in the proceedings and punishment, and the legal team assisted me in writing my original memorandum requesting the same punishment. My enlisted TAC continued to encourage me not to push the matter, that it was best to remain quiet and move on. However, I knew how important it was for me to demand an equal punishment.

The importance of advocating for an equal punishment became more apparent after discussions with the BTO's staff who had previously witnessed disparities in the punishments between white Cadets and Cadets of color, specifically Black Cadets. They pointed out that these punishments unequivocally favored white Cadets. I remember one staff member discussing how much harder it is for Black Cadets who go through West Point, citing the numerous cases where Black Cadets received harsher punishments and less support from their Chain of Command during their proceedings.

As I was having these discussions at the Academy, I was fortunate enough to have one of my parents, who is a Colonel in the Army, come to speak with the senior leadership about the racial disparity apparent in my disciplinary proceedings. She was not only dismissed by the Superintendent's secretary, but the Superintendent also denied that racism played a role in my case. After she left, I continued to question why I received an unequal punishment. Eventually, the only answer I received was that Academy leaders reserved the right to give punishments across the wide spectrum of available measures. The BTO chose to give me the harshest sentence, while giving my white peers a more lenient one.

During my case, the BTO offered me a deal. He said that if a member of my Chain of Command determined that my shoes were shinier than his, he would cut ten walking hours off of my punishment. If he had the shinier shoes, then I would have five hours added. The BTO decided that the white Cadet first sergeant would be the judge, and he quickly determined that the BTO had shinier shoes. I had five hours added to my punishment for a total of 100 walking hours. The other

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<sup>20</sup> Walking hours, also known as "hours" or "disciplinary duty tours," consist of marching back and forth across the central area of campus in the most formal uniform while carrying a parade rifle. A Cadet can march up to 7 hours during a normal weekend and has restricted privileges until they finish marching all the hours.

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Cadet of color—who was guilty of corroboration along with the offense we shared—received only 85 hours because his shoes were determined shinier than those of the BTO.

The entire case lasted for over eight months, a period during which I suffered not only psychological and emotional harm, but also the burden of being seen as a troublesome cadet. I was continuously made to wear the mark of a criminal, a demoted rank, which is synonymous with disobedience. My white counterparts in this case did not have to experience the same stigma of rank reduction and the consequential feeling of inferiority. During this time, my GPA was the lowest it had been while at the Academy and I faced the added pressure of explaining myself during interviews while my white counterparts did not. I often went to therapy, and was forced to deal with the emotional labor of fighting a racist and unjust punishment in addition to the routine burdens and stressors of Black cadet life.

Eventually, my continuous efforts were met with a decision to reduce my assigned punishment. My walking hours were decreased, and though I was allowed to study abroad, the harm incurred during the entire ordeal affected my ability to academically perform. Therefore, I decided to stay at the Academy out of fear that a semester abroad would further the blow to my academic GPA. Leadership privately admitted that the disparities that occurred in my case were wrong and said they would take a closer look at each situation to ensure equity moving forward. But they never acknowledged that racism caused the racial disparity in my case and did not codify any reform to the disciplinary system to ensure equitable punishments in the future.

“I have seen discriminatory punishments, in which an African American Cadet committed an infraction and received a company board with walking hours, whereas a Caucasian Cadet committed the same infraction and received only a verbal warning.”

My case is not the end. There are many other Cadets who have asked me for advice because they received more walking hours, room restriction, and loss of privileges than white cadets guilty of the same offense. Whether there is a difference in GPA or the color of their skin, no cadet should receive radically different punishments for the same offense. Without the public admission of guilt for systemic racial discrimination in West Point’s disciplinary system followed by codified reforms to ensure equity, cases such as mine will continue to disproportionately target Black Cadets at the Academy.

### Call to Action: Remove Financially Harmful Punishments

Although Cadets do not technically have to pay money for their education at West Point, there are financial barriers that exist. When Cadets enter West Point, they are required to pay a \$2,000 deposit for their uniforms and equipment. If a first-year Cadet is unable to pay this, they will have \$100 deducted from their measly \$200 monthly pay for 20 months until the \$2,000 debt they

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automatically incur is paid. This is harmful to Cadets who may be sending money home to their families or who are not able to pay for flights to return home during breaks.<sup>21</sup>

A new policy was implemented in August 2019 which allows the Academy to reduce a Cadet's pay as a disciplinary action. Under this policy, the Academy may reduce Cadet's pay by 80% for three months. This policy memo includes an "Equal Opportunity" section stating that decisions cannot discriminate based on the Cadet's race.<sup>22</sup>

Not only does this have a classist impact on Cadets at the Academy, disproportionately harming those Cadets who rely more heavily on their monthly pay, but it is also particularly harmful to Black Cadets in light of the racially discriminatory nature of disciplinary procedures at West Point. This is depicted in the narrative at the start of this section. Intersecting with racially inequitable punishments, this policy therefore adds a financially harmful layer to the systemic racism already experienced by Black Cadets at the Academy. While this policy mirrors the forfeiture of pay mechanism used as a disciplinary measure in the wider Army, it is not compatible with an anti-racist institution as long as the Academy continues to have racially discriminatory practices.

### Call to Action: Invest in Inclusion

Walking around West Point as a Black Cadet imparts the hard lesson of learning to be alone and not afraid. From the limited contact with other Black Cadets in their classrooms to the lack of representation in their Officer and professorial leadership, Black Cadets learn to walk the paths of

"I had a racist roommate that would call me the n-word and spit on me. I told the 4th Regimental Tactical Officer about it, and they did nothing."

West Point alone unless they go out of their way to find their Black community. While the message "every Soldier is a battle buddy" is taught since their first summer, this camaraderie does not always extend to Black Cadets, especially when non-Black Cadets, faculty, and alumni openly express that rhetoric directly or on social media. White, cisgender, heteronormative, Protestant men are afforded belonging and encouragement

that marginalized communities are not. No matter how much there is a desire for quantitative data to prove this phenomenon, this mental toll can not always be quantifiable.

Unless West Point invests in a space that recognizes and understands the myriad of emotional, psychological, and physical harms inflicted on Black Cadets, this population of students will continue to accrue damage on their mental readiness while believing they do not have the resources to report these incidents to trusted allies. It is of the utmost importance that West Point acknowledges the historic and enduring presence and impact of white supremacy. In doing so, the

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<sup>21</sup> Cadet Budget 2018-2019, 4, <https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/General/Parents/Cadet%20Budget%202018-2019.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant General Darryl A. Williams, "Policy and Procedures for Implementing Cadet Forfeiture of Pay as a Sanction Following a Hearing for Conduct Deficiency or Misconduct," August 22, 2019.

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Academy must take action to dismantle those processes and invest in a space that nurtures Black Cadets.

There is a need for space—supported and resourced by the Academy—that is specifically dedicated to Black Cadets. The Academy must take action to dismantle the processes that safeguard white supremacy, to stop reinforcing colorblindness, and to invest in a space that preserves Black Cadets’ identity. While the Cultural Affairs Seminar (CAS) has been a place for Black Cadets to find solidarity and refuge, the vagueness of its mission has allowed people to co-opt the space and direct attention towards other efforts that

do not solely help the Black community. Several staff and faculty members discouraged the effort to change the name of CAS to one that showed outward support of the Black Cadet community because of a fear of the Academy and alumni’s backlash affecting funding and support of the club’s efforts. This demonstrated to CAS Cadets that they must conceal their important mission to primarily support Black Cadets’ development and retention. Additionally, the colorblindness and unwillingness of the Academy to specifically support a group dedicated to Black Cadets turned CAS into a space that thinly spread

the group’s already scarce resources from the Black community to other minority groups. The Academy must support more spaces that will allow all minority groups to thrive, so individual groups do not have to vie for scarce resources. Diversity is necessary and important within our ranks, and all marginalized populations must be supported.

“I took my regional history class during first semester of freshman year. I was one of two people of color and the only Black Cadet in the class. Despite frequent responses to questions, my attendance at weekly additional instruction, making use of the writing center, getting tutoring from history majors, asking for help from my peers, and demonstrating continual improvement, my instructor would continue to tell me I was struggling. Yet he would praise comments from students who seldom paid attention, frequently slept in class, or overtly neglected to do the readings.”

This example illuminates a recurring problem where decision-makers at West Point act cautiously out of fear of losing donor funding. West Point must create conditions that prove its commitment to diversity and inclusion by conducting a thorough and honest investigation of West Point’s donor practices. As one of the nation’s most trusted federally-funded, public institutions, West Point must honestly assess the influence it provides donors, especially because this influence has the potential to harm Cadets and erode trust in the Academy. In addition to their control of physical spaces, donors can influence policies beyond any democratic process, and this imbalance must be accounted for and explained to the public. For example, the United Daughters of the Confederacy has repeatedly donated antebellum art and sponsored cadet awards.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> United Daughters of the Confederacy Webpage, <https://hqudc.org/>; Jimmy Byrn and Gabe Royal, “What Should West Point Do About its Robert E. Lee Problem?” Modern War Institute, June 22, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/west-point-robert-e-lee-problem/>.

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In an effort to counter the Academy's failure to adequately invest in their inclusion, Black Cadets must take on at least four jobs: the "pursuit of excellence" in all three pillars, their own survival against racism, the duty to protect underclassmen from experiencing racial harms, and educating

"One Officer at the Academy referred to a group of Black males as thugs, rebellious slaves, and equated them to the Black Panther Party which he said is a terrorist organization. Another Officer called my friend and me 'bitches' and 'motherfuckers.' We are both Black and the Officer is white."

non-Black Cadets on racism because West Point does not. The burdens placed on Black Cadets is a direct reflection of the Academy's failure to prioritize diversity in its leadership.

The Academy lacks a diverse population of Black Officers and professors that provide a necessary influence on Cadets. More specifically, West Point must hire more Black Officers as Tactical Officers and instructors, not just in the Diversity

Outreach Office or ODIEO. West Point must put their words into action and prioritize diversity among both the ranks of Cadets and staff. The presence of Black staff and faculty allows for the opportunity for Black Cadets to find a mentor that understands anti-racism and shares in similar lived experiences. It is also of critical importance that both Black and non-Black Cadets are being taught and led by Black Officers and professors. Their absence denotes another significant way that West Point fails to live up to its claims of diversity.

We ultimately ask: why are there more Black people scrubbing the Mess Hall floors than there are developing Cadets?

### Call to Action: Divest from Confederate Memorialization

A Cadet wakes up in Lee Barracks, which is named for Robert E. Lee, the West Point graduate who betrayed his country for the worst possible reason: to protect "states' rights" to own slaves. According to Brigadier General Ty Seidule, Professor Emeritus in the USMA Department of History, Lee killed more U.S. Army Soldiers than any other enemy general in history. Although every other U.S. Army Virginia colonel in 1861 remained loyal, Robert E. Lee chose to commit treason to protect his and others' enslaved labor farms—also known as plantations. This barracks in his name was not dedicated following the Civil War as a gesture of reconciliation, but in 1970, amidst the Civil Rights Movement.

The Cadet walks out of Lee Barracks and past Reconciliation Plaza, a monument built as recently as 2001, which bears a list of the names of those Confederate Officers who graduated from West Point. This stands next to a romanticized, white-washed narrative of postbellum "reconciliation" that cherry-picks three examples of amity between graduates from the North and South during the war, fails to mention slavery, and bears a granite bust of General Lee.<sup>24</sup> Such a message echoes the

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<sup>24</sup> Reconciliation Plaza, Historical Marker Project. [https://historicalmarkerproject.com/markers/HM171S\\_reconciliation-plaza\\_West-Point-NY.html](https://historicalmarkerproject.com/markers/HM171S_reconciliation-plaza_West-Point-NY.html)

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“some very fine people on both sides” sentiment that was painfully prominent in the aftermath of the Charlottesville white nationalist protests in 2017.<sup>25</sup>

They walk past Honor Plaza, another monument built in the last two decades. Along with their own reflection in the granite edifice, they read this quote from Lee: “There is true glory and true honor; the glory of duty done—the honor of the integrity of principle.” Was it his duty to fight for the continued exploitation of Black bodies? Is this a duty that should be inscribed in the monument meant to celebrate and encourage the integrity of the Corps? What does it say about the persistence of white supremacy in our military culture that both of these monuments were erected in the last twenty years?

The Cadet continues to the library to study. They are greeted by Lee’s 6-foot persona on a painting hanging in the lobby, in which his Black slave stands in the bottom right leading Lee’s white horse.<sup>26</sup> Later that day, they attend a meeting in the Superintendent’s Board Room, where paintings of Lee and his fellow Confederate General, P.G.T. Beauregard, loom over the conference table. That evening, on the way to their sponsor’s home, the Cadet walks down Lee Road and turns onto Beauregard Place.

“The only reason you got accepted is because you’re Black and on the football team.”

What does an experience soaked in such romanticized remembrance of white supremacy teach a Cadet about the history of our nation? Is this Cadet confronting any condemnation of our nation’s intimate relationship with white supremacy? If this Cadet is Black, what is the psychological toll of training in a space that celebrates the people who would have died fighting for them to be enslaved? And what is the impact on the overall cohesion and inclusion for a diverse Corps of Cadets?

When met with a call to remove Confederate naming at West Point, the response was that such memorialization represents “individuals who are a part of our history as an institution and a nation, not as representatives of a cause.”<sup>27</sup> But what if we recognize that the reason these names were memorialized was an historical attempt to solidify the cause of white supremacy in the U.S. psyche?

In his article, “Treason is Treason,” Brigadier General Seidule presents evidence showing that such a cause was the reason for this memorialization. During the immediate aftermath of the Civil War all

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<sup>25</sup> President Donald Trump On Charlottesville: You Had Very Fine People, On Both Sides. CNBC, Aug 15, 2017, YouTube video, 4:07. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmaZR8E12bs>

<sup>26</sup> We understand that this painting may be coming down this summer. If so, it is not enough to do so silently, as was done in the past with the return of the Department of Mathematics Robert E. Lee award to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. This is an opportunity to make an explicit public statement about why such a painting does not align with the values of the Academy or contribute to an inclusive environment.

<sup>27</sup> David Delaney, “Remove Confederate Names at West Point and Annapolis,” *MoveOn*, April 2020. <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/remove-confederate-names-at-u-s-military-academies>

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the way until 1902, West Point was committed to ensuring that Confederate treason against the United States not be glorified through monuments. But from 1902 onwards, the exclusionary nature of Civil War remembrance toward pro-slavery fighters was eroded through the lobbying of neo-Confederate organizations. This shift, during the early 1900s, aligned with a nationwide spike in Confederate memorials, as the Jim Crow era began and neo-Confederates sought to reinforce the white supremacist narrative.<sup>28</sup> This also coincided with the period of 46 years when no Black Cadets graduated from the Academy.<sup>29</sup>

One such organization that funded Confederate memorialization at West Point was the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which is widely recognized to have promoted the negationist Lost Cause ideology arguing that slavery did not play a central role in the Civil War. They actively wrote history textbooks and funded monuments around the Nation to codify and romanticize white supremacy in U.S. memory. Less than two years ago, their website stated: “Slaves, for the most part, were faithful and devoted. Most slaves were usually ready and willing to serve their masters.”<sup>30</sup> While West Point’s History Department has spoken out on the fact that “slavery was the single most important cause of the Civil War for both sides,” the treatment of Confederate memorialization at West Point does not follow its lead.<sup>31</sup>

Although other historical figures whose names are featured prominently at West Point, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Sylvanus Thayer, Dennis Hart Mahan, were also slave owners, their memory represents a different context and a different purpose.<sup>32</sup> The naming of Washington Hall and Jefferson Hall were not fueled by the intention to promote slave owning—though this moral stain on their record must not be ignored. Rather, Washington’s legacy centers in his role as the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army during the War for Independence and his place as the first president. Jefferson’s legacy in our history centers in his authorship of the Declaration of Independence and his presidency.<sup>33</sup> Neither of these men committed treason against the United States. Contrastingly, Robert E. Lee’s primary legacy is one of undeniable commitment to the “states’ rights” to own slaves. While he should be remembered for his role in this history, that role cannot be celebrated by an academy seeking to be anti-racist. Surely, West Point can ideate

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<sup>28</sup> Ty Seidule, “Treason is Treason,” in *The Journal of Military History* 76(2), 2012, 449.

<sup>29</sup> Seidule, “From Slavery to Black Power,” 76.

<sup>30</sup> Kali Holloway, “7 things the United Daughters of the Confederacy might not want you to know about them,” *Salon*, October 6, 2018. [https://www.salon.com/2018/10/06/7-things-the-united-daughters-of-the-confederacy-might-not-want-you-to-know-about-them\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2018/10/06/7-things-the-united-daughters-of-the-confederacy-might-not-want-you-to-know-about-them_partner/)

<sup>31</sup> Ty Seidule, “Was the Civil War About Slavery?” *Prager U*, Aug 10, 2015, YouTube video, 5:50. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcy7qV-BGF4&t=33s>

<sup>32</sup> Seidule, “From Slavery to Black Power,” 70-71.

<sup>33</sup> Jefferson's personal involvement in the sexual exploitation of his Black slaves might be best contextualized through art, such as Titus Kaphar’s “Beyond the Myth of Benevolence” (2014), available at: <https://www.culturetype.com/2018/03/28/titus-kaphar-and-ken-gonzales-day-explore-unseen-narratives-in-historic-portraiture-in-new-national-portrait-gallery-exhibition/>.

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alternate ways to teach about problematic leaders without “erasing history,” just as Germany has done in remembering—without celebrating—the leaders of the Nazi Regime.

West Point has made some progress on this front. The Mathematics Department has stopped giving the Robert E. Lee Award for excellence in mathematics and has since returned the award to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The West Point Band stopped playing the 1861 Confederate march, “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” as Cadets march into the Mess Hall. The current Superintendent, Lieutenant General Darryl Williams, who is the first Black Superintendent of West Point, replaced the portrait of Lee hanging prominently in his living room of Quarters 100 with one depicting U.S. Army General Ulysses S. Grant. According to an anonymous source, recent attempts to remove other Confederate memorials were met with former Secretary of Defense General Mattis’ response to “not to get ahead of the Army.” Is it any wonder that the Lee painting was removed without any official statement—that it had to be done secretly? Will this painting resurface when the Black Superintendent leaves?

In terms of actively celebrating its Black graduates, West Point has taken some positive steps of late. However, these decisions are often tempered by a failure to recognize its own complicity in their struggles against racism while at the academy. In 2017, Davis Barracks was established in honor of General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who graduated in the top 15 percent of his class in 1936 and was the fourth Black graduate of West Point. He later became the second Black general officer in the Air Force. While a cadet, Davis was forced to room alone because of the overt racism of his classmates. For his entire four years at West Point and beyond into the Army, his classmates refused to speak with him, a punishment often inflicted on Black cadets, called “silencing.” His memory is rightfully honored in the Commemoration of Davis Barracks. Yet, for decades afterward West Point publicly denied his silencing and has since failed to make a statement towards the individual ramifications of its institutional racism both past and present.<sup>34</sup>

There are far too many recent examples of West Point publicly lauding the diversity of its graduates and its Corps of Cadets without protecting them from racist backlash. Just four years ago, the 16 Black women graduates in the Class of 2016 took a photo together, an annual commemorative event for this identity group, with their fists raised. The public leak of this photo led to immediate judgement and condemnation for allegedly making a political statement in uniform. These women faced an immense amount of public hatred and were threatened with expulsion from the Academy, just days before graduation, which would have caused them to incur huge debts to the military. Though they ultimately were not officially punished, the “Proud 16” should not be considered a historic milestone of institutional growth. The Academy failed to protect these cadets from or punish the racism that they experienced in the aftermath of this photo. It has never recognized the culpability in its own passivity which comes as a convenient by-product of white silence. While West Point continually showboats its successful and high ranking Black cadets, graduates, and leadership on the outside to deny racism inside, it has never put forth the necessary effort to foster an anti-racist environment necessary for their well-being and inclusion. Could one step toward doing so be the removal of racist monuments and their replacement with anti-racist ones?

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<sup>34</sup> Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., *American: An Autobiography* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 28.

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In conclusion, West Point cannot be an anti-racist institution or even live up to its espoused values of “Duty, Honor, Country,” if it continues to celebrate the legacy of those who committed treason in defense of slavery. In order to demonstrate West Point’s commitment to anti-racism and create an inclusive environment for Black Cadets, West Point must remove all bastions of white supremacy from the institution.

If any guidance on moving forward with this point is needed, we specifically request the following:

1. Rename Lee Barracks, Lee Road, Lee Gate, and Beauregard Place after Black graduates.
2. Remove the paintings of Lee and Beauregard in Jefferson Hall, the Mess Hall, and the Superintendent’s Conference Room.
3. Demolish Reconciliation Plaza. Replace it with a monument honoring Black cadets and their history at West Point, written by a commission of Black cadets, graduates, and historians. Include this history in the New Cadet Knowledge Book.
4. Remove Lee’s quote from Honor Plaza leaving the marble it is gouged from scarred as a monument to its removal, just as is the name of the traitor, Benedict Arnold, in the Old Cadet Chapel.
5. Establish a Commission to determine what should be done with the following: the removed paintings of Lee, the bronze triptych depicting slaves and the Ku Klux Klan, the 1910 Cullum Hall plaque listing Confederate Soldiers, and the Lee and Beauregard plaques in Cullum Hall denoting their time as Superintendents. Suggestions for this commission include: Brigadier General Ty Seidule, Professor Elizabeth Samet, Lieutenant Colonel Winston Williams, Alumni in Do More Together, and a group of Black Cadets.
6. Release a public statement to all Cadets and alumni explaining the plans for these requests and the explicit reasoning behind the changes.

Congress is currently considering HR 4179, which calls for all installations receiving federal funding to remove Confederate memorials.<sup>35</sup> Will West Point act out of moral courage and proactively remove the Confederate monuments in order to be anti-racist? Or will it await pressure from Congress to be forced to do so? Both Cadets and the watching world will observe the difference.

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<sup>35</sup> 116th Congress, H.R.4179 - No Federal Funding for Confederate Symbols Act, 2020. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4179/all-actions?s=1&r=4&overview=closed&KWICView=false>

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### CONCLUSION

An anti-racist West Point will not come to fruition without significant support from the Long Gray Line itself. We must, as our Alma Mater says, bear the motto of West Point and fight to ensure that *Honor be e'er untarned*. And, *when our work is done*—when anti-racism is a reality at West Point—*may it be said, “Well Done. Be Thou At Peace.”*

As we look ahead toward the future of the Long Gray Line, we envision a future in which the Academy has publicly acknowledged its white supremacist history; in which it maintains a zero-tolerance policy for racism; in which all cadets and faculty are educated in anti-racism in order to create an inclusive Academy environment, prepare them to lead in a diverse Army, and develop anti-racist leaders of character that will go on to lead widespread change in our nation; in which West Point is an anti-racist space that values the lives and experiences of Black Cadets and ensures that they live in a space free of racism, a space without Confederate monuments, a space with anti-racist monuments erected in their stead.

We are committed to demanding, garnering public support for, and ensuring that these policies are implemented. In the words of the hymn, “The Corps,” we implore all alumni and dedicated citizens reading this document to *grip hands with us* in this endeavor to live up to the values of Duty, Honor, Country.

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### APPENDICES

#### Appendix A: Accompanying Message to Academy Leadership

*Note: On June 25th, 2020, this policy proposal was sent via email to West Point's Superintendent, Dean, Commandant, and Athletic Director. The Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Chairman of the USMA Board of Visitors were copied on the message. The email stated the following:*

Lieutenant General Williams, Brigadier General Jebb, Brigadier General Buzzard, and Athletic Director Buddie,

We are writing as a group of alumni invested in pursuing anti-racism at West Point. From our perspective as recent members of the Long Gray Line, we are concerned that Black Cadets are experiencing racism in a manner inconsistent with the statement made by the Superintendent in a USA Today interview that the Academy “does not have a systemic problem with racism.” We hope for West Point to become a place where that statement rings true and therefore want to partner with the Academy in striving for that.

In addition, we want to respond to Secretary Esper's June 18th request for the Pentagon to “immediately present actionable ideas that the department can begin implementing now,” to ensure that the military leads the way as it “embraces diversity and inclusion, and rejects hate, bigotry, and unlawful discrimination in all forms.” On June 25th, he extended this request to the entire military force, asking us to “have the hard conversations with [our] leadership.” This is our attempt to do so: we have written the attached proposal containing action steps West Point can take to lead the effort as an anti-racist institution.

We are inspired by the historical precedent of the Black Cadets who wrote the “Black Manifesto” in September 1971, resulting in the termination of President Nixon's proposal to build a Confederate monument at the Academy. These Cadets delivered the manifesto to their Superintendent, who—knowing it was not in his power alone to stop the President from setting up this monument—presented it to the Pentagon in order to generate the adequate level of authority to meet their demands. Our proposal seeks to follow in their example: respectfully organizing support for a cause about which we are passionate in order to see meaningful change that benefits the mission of the Academy in producing leaders of character.

We hope Academy leadership will agree that, by writing this proposal, we are espousing the same values that West Point seeks to instill in its graduates: leadership, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. “I will have the courage to choose the harder right over the easier wrong,” says the Cadet Creed. Amidst the ongoing anti-racist movement around the world, our easier wrong is to join in the finger pointing, to lay bare West Point's racism, and to do so without thinking strategically about the ways the Academy can improve. The harder right is for the Long Gray Line to lead the war to eradicate racism and normalize anti-racism—a war that has never been won. Will West Point lead the way for service academies, for the Department of Defense, and for the Nation?

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Though we agree that racist individuals can “be redeemed,” as quoted by Lieutenant General Williams, by learning to be anti-racist, we believe that the Academy must first acknowledge its own institutional racism and establish norms and practices that lead to institutional anti-racism. Given West Point’s troubled history of racism—evidenced by its treatment of Henry O. Flipper, and countless recorded and unrecorded stories of racism since Flipper’s graduation—we feel that the need to continue fighting racism at the Academy is obvious. West Point’s barracks were only desegregated 70 years ago. The racial disparities between enlisted and Officer personnel in the military as a whole are stark, especially in senior positions. There are far more Black people bussing the tables of West Point’s Mess Hall than there are teaching Cadets. This is unacceptable and necessitates that more work be done. Improving West Point’s diversity is important—but only one of many steps in fighting racism.

Because West Point has many stakeholders, we later plan to share this proposal with the Association of Graduates, the Academic Board, and the rest of the Board of Visitors. We also plan to release it publicly in conjunction with a long form publication of firsthand narratives, intended to sustain the conversation inside and outside of the Long Gray Line, and heighten the public accountability that drives change.

We ask that you begin making the changes available to you by following through with the action steps detailed in this proposal, rather than waiting to be pressured into action by outside forces. We propose that you consider releasing a public statement acknowledging the existence of systemic racism at West Point, demonstrating commitment to anti-racism at West Point, outlining anti-racist education that will be provided to staff and faculty, and detailing plans to eradicate Confederate memorialization. Such positive, tangible actions will put West Point on a trajectory toward eradicating racism, and will display to the public the Academy’s commitment to anti-racism.

Among other actions in this proposal, we offer ways that existing teams within USMA, such as the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (ODIEO), could be improved. We want to be very clear: this proposal is not for those teams. We believe that these teams would make the necessary changes if given the authority and vision to do so. Rather, this is directed toward you, the Academy’s leadership, who have the power to make the necessary changes—changes that will empower ODIEO and all entities at West Point to work together to be anti-racist.

We know that this has been a very busy time for you, and we thank you for your leadership during the challenging time of the pandemic and the ongoing discussion about racial injustice in our Nation. We would be happy to discuss any of the proposal’s topics with you, and look forward to engaging in further dialogue on the insidious issue of anti-Black racism in America.

Very Respectfully,

Lieutenants Simone Askew, David Bindon, Maria Blom, Care Kehn, Jack Lowe, Nette Monaus, Ashley Salgado, Joy Schaeffer, and Tony Smith

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### Appendix B: Testimonials of Experiencing Racism at USMA

*Note: The following testimonies were given by Cadets during a survey conducted in the spring of 2020 regarding their experiences of racism at the Academy. The responses have been lightly edited for clarity and concision while maintaining the key points of the original responses.*

“I was called a “nigger” during my freshman year at West Point. I was told that I was going to rob someone because I was Black. A student made a noose and put it on his Black roommate’s desk as a joke. I was called ‘white’ because I speak intelligently, which is built on the assumption that white people speak better than Black people.” These are just a few of many examples.”

“I had a racist roommate that would call me the n-word and spit on me. I told the 4th Regimental Tactical Officer about it, and they did nothing.”

“One Officer at the Academy referred to a group of Black males as thugs, rebellious slaves, and equated them to the Black Panther Party which he said is a terrorist organization. Another Officer called my friend and me “bitches” and “motherfuckers.” We are both Black and the Officer is white.”

“I was called a ‘nigger’ during my plebe year. When I reported it to my Tactical Officer, they instead accused me of lying and initiated an honor investigation against me.”

“White Cadets, instructors, and Tactical Officers consistently make comments that are anti-Black and discriminatory. These incidents were written off by the Chain of Command as merely bad conduct or poor judgement. This alienates Black Cadets and other Cadets of color and prevents us from accessing the developmental benefits that USMA is supposed to provide. We are consistently silenced and shunned by our Chain of Command and peers when we speak out against racist behavior.”

“Just last week, an instructor sent out a class survey and asked Cadets to identify themselves by race. Among the races available was the word ‘Negro’. I can’t even begin to explain how this makes me feel as a Black Cadet who has invested so much time and effort into becoming a member of the Long Gray Line. My children will NEVER be encouraged to attend West Point as long as our leadership continues to place the eradication of racism on the back burner. Other services academies are miles ahead of where West Point is and it makes it impossible to have pride in my institution. We have to do better.”

“During my freshman year, I was standing in formation the morning after the 2016 presidential election. A senior in my company was talking about how excited he was that President Trump won, fist pumping and cheering, ‘Yes! Finally, a white man is back in power!’ I was so uncomfortable that I went back to my room and cried because I wasn’t white and I wasn’t a man. I realized, in that moment, how much I felt like an outsider at West Point and in the military. It didn’t matter how high my GPA was or how fit I was. I was always going to be a Black woman before I was anything else and there were people in the organization that were going to treat me as such.”

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“I have seen discriminatory punishments, in which an African American Cadet committed an infraction and received a company board with walking hours, whereas a Caucasian Cadet committed the same infraction and received only a verbal warning.”

“I am the only Black female in my class within my company, yet I have found the ability to make friends with my other classmates despite our differences. But one day I sat with a group of white males in my company during dinner. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was coming up. One of them mentioned how his teacher made him feel ‘guilty’ about being white because of the oppression their ancestors put upon minority Americans for hundreds of years. The Cadet explained how he should not feel guilty because he was not the one that caused the pain. However, I mentioned how it is important to recognize the privilege young, white, straight, Christian males reap due to the power dynamic white men have created in American society. Once I said those words, I was suddenly being shouted at by every white male at that table. I was being told that I was ‘crazy and racist,’ that ‘African Americans should do the same because of affirmative action,’ and ‘You’re only saying that because you’re Black.’ I have learned that the ‘respect for other races’ at West Point is simply a cover-up for the underlying racism that this institution tolerates. This is especially saddening to me because I chose to attend this place because I thought that racism would be addressed.”

“There were several incidents on an anonymous social media platform that had subtle racist remarks, such as ‘Go back to Africa.’ Those who called them out for racism would be called ‘sensitive’ or ‘unable to take a joke.’ One post asked, ‘What Halloween costume should I wear at the Plebe dance?’ Someone put the letter ‘N’ in one anonymous post online, and then another user put up the letter ‘P,’ until the word ‘Nigger’ was spelled out by six different users. I anonymously commented how ridiculous this was. I was then told that I was being a ‘pussy’ and a ‘sensitive bitch.’ From that point on, I realized just how alone I truly am and how much of a racist problem West Point has but refuses to admit to. I vowed to NEVER go on the platform Jodel again in order to maintain my peace while enduring the racist environment that is West Point.”

“The only reason you got accepted is because you’re Black and on the football team.”

“I’ve heard instructors comment that ‘braids and curly hair aren’t professional’ which targets minorities born with naturally curly hair or wear braids to protect their hair from breakage.”

“An old grad made a racist ‘joke’ to Cadets, who were primarily Black and Hispanic, saying that they probably got their exercise by breaking into houses. When I told him I did not understand nor did I find his joke funny, he walked away. I reported him through the diversity office.”

“During the first few days of practice for the NCAA swim team, a white friend was discussing romantic interest in other Cadets. She went out of her way to comment that she would never date a Black Cadet because ‘their skin feels disgusting’ to her. As a white person, I was shocked by such a blatantly racist comment and could not even respond at first.”

“At the Prep School, one of the Cadet leaders often made inappropriate, racially charged, and derogatory comments to my fellow Cadet candidates and I. [One of our cadet leaders] would often talk about only one demographic attending the Prep School because we—Black Cadet candidates—

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did not have the academic ability to succeed at West Point. He pointed out our *inferiority* and lack of intellectual abilities compared to his. He added that the closest that we, as Black Cadets, would get to his GPA was in the physical pillar.”

“I took my regional history class during first semester of freshman year. I was one of two people of color and the only Black Cadet in the class. I noticed something was wrong in my class within the first few lessons. Despite frequent responses to questions, my attendance at weekly additional instruction, making use of the writing center, getting tutoring from history majors, asking for help from my peers, and demonstrating continual improvement, my instructor he would continue to tell me I was struggling. Yet he would praise comments from students who seldom paid attention, frequently slept in class, or overtly neglected to do the readings. The students he often praised were of his same race or white. He eventually looked me up on the teacher’s portal for accessing student information and looked at my pre-college standardized testing. He commented how that explained a lot and how difficult it would be for me at West Point. Instead of helping me learn and achieve, he put a limit on my growth. As opposed to supporting me when I was overtly making the effort to learn and even leading class discussions, I often received the lowest participation grades and his disfavor.”

“I received A’s for my military development grades, an A for my summer training grade, and even the Recondo badge for successfully completing many training tasks. Military performance has always been my strongest pillar. It therefore surprised me when my squad leader told me my force distributed grade for the detail. He said he would have graded me higher if I had done more to be part of the group. As someone who made sure to integrate himself into the group by hanging out with them during free time and sharing personal stories, I found it hard to believe that I was not integrated well enough. When I asked for examples, he cited my lack of interest in country music or my failure to try dipping tobacco during summer training. When I asked my other squad mates, I learned that they received comments that were tangible: not carrying their share of weight, having a bad attitude, and failing to follow orders. I performed well, but because I did not share the same cultural appreciation for dipping or country music, I did not receive the grade I deserved.”

## Appendix C: Example Proposal for New Core Course



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
**UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**  
West Point, New York 10996

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

MADN-BSL

5 February 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR Dr. Bruce Keith, Academic Affairs Division, United States Military Academy,  
West Point, New York 10996

SUBJECT: New Core Course—*Contemporary Social Issues*

1. *Purpose*: Recommend *Contemporary Social Issues* as a core course the U.S. Military Academy.
2. *Issue*: West Point graduates lack a course on contemporary social and cross-cultural issues.
3. *Discussion*: In theory, West Point has a mandate to ensure that cadets understand social and cultural issues to be leaders of character. In practice, different entities at USMA have done this in a patchwork, atheoretical, reactive, and police-type manner. For example, a psychological foundation for understanding human behavior is introduced to cadets in PL100 and modicum social issues are covered in PME<sup>2</sup>. However, PME<sup>2</sup> is principally training, rather education with assessment and accountability. Further, a handful of individual level social issues are indirectly touched upon in PL300 as a leadership issue. However, within all of this limited coverage and contexts is a preoccupation and focus on the individual as the unit of analysis. The individual is only half the picture; environmental factors need to be addressed. Social issues are aspects of society that people would like to improve or change. For example, military academies have been broad-sided by and reactive to a number of social problems over the years—from academic dishonesty to alcoholism to allegations of racism, sexism, sexual harassment and proselytizing, to crime, terrorism, and war. And nowhere in the curriculum do we confront these issues collectively, systemically, and epistemologically. Thus, *Contemporary Social Issues* as a core course serves as least ten purposes:
  - a. develops an understanding of social and cultural issues;
  - b. links cadets (individual) to public issues (social) and international concerns (global);
  - c. creates accountability for values and respect for others;
  - d. applies problem solving skills to intellectual and professional development;
  - e. addresses the institutional mission for greater understanding of diversity issues;
  - f. balances the individual perspective and the leader thought process;
  - g. fills the contemporary social/environmental knowledge gap and frames from local to global;
  - h. proactive toward USMA and Army social issues (e.g., sex discrimination, alcohol use);
  - i. emphasizes both sides of the domestic and international *Cultural Perspective* goal coin;
  - j. complements cultural languages with the language of culture.
4. *Recommendation*: Offer a new core course: *Contemporary Social Issues (CSI)* beginning AYT 11-1. According to the American Sociological Association, a *CSI*-type course is a lower-division gateway course for millions of undergraduates at thousands of universities around the world. This course would provide scope and depth on a range of social and cross-cultural issues such as human sexual behavior; alcohol and drugs; violence in societies; crime and criminal justice; social inequalities and diversity (e.g., race/ethnic relations; sex discrimination); urban problems; poverty; population and food; environmental crisis; and war, terrorism, and ethnic conflicts. Further, this course would identify essential elements of a social issue, methods of studying social issues, tools for breaking through emotions and defenses, roles of leaders and collective action in tackling problems, and finally, alternative strategies for overcoming social problems. The structure of the course connects

private troubles (individual) to public issues (social) and fosters social, ethical, and moral development. Finally, the course will examine social issues cross-culturally and cross-nationally.

5. *Impacts:* *CSI* would serve the overarching academic goal by having cadets anticipate and respond to social and cultural uncertainties and certainties in the changing technological, social, political, and economic world.

Seven academic program goals and one related to the Cadet Leader Development System would be integrated into *CSI*. The two most significant would be the *Cultural Perspective* and *Understanding Human Behavior*. From a socio-cultural perspective, *CSI* would encourage cadets to develop an appreciation of the constraints of culture and cultural diversity with special consideration for the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status as correlates of social problems both domestically and internationally. Likewise, sociology is concerned with understanding human behavior as it is informed by the nature versus nurture debate, but emphasizing group experiences and human interaction in personal, public, and global domains.

Additional goals no less integrated into *CSI* would be the *Historical Perspective*, *Communication*, *Continued Intellectual Development*, *Creativity*, and *Moral Awareness*. Finally, this course would address self-awareness in a novel but educated way. In this case, cadets would be challenged to examine the objectification of social issues such as ethnic conflict, alcoholism, and family violence, among others, from a social and cultural lens. Cadets would learn about the diversity of constituents of social problems and confront their own perceptions about these issues relative to the roles they play in social life. As such, self-awareness is inextricably linked to the self—cadets would find it necessary to study at the cross-hairs of their personal biography and civic and global history, consequently, connect and overcome global concerns, public issues, and private troubles.

*CSI* would provide a dynamic forum for analysis of current and cutting-edge issues that are currently fairly absent in both the Core and the Corp. The goal is an ability to analyze sets of specific concepts and theoretical justifications that contribute to understanding social issues of today and tomorrow from primarily sociological, but to include historical, political, religious, cultural, and cross-national, perspectives.

Finally, *CSI* could assume academic responsibility for the bulk of lessons currently taught in the Professional Military Ethics Education's honor and respect classes. For example, *CSI* would address core issues motivating some current lessons: "Recognizing Cultures and the Importance of Diversity" (PMEE 4-7), "Alcohol in the Army" (PMEE 1-7), and "Sex Signals" (PMEE 2-6).

In terms of resources, *CSI* course enrollment would be approximately 1,100 students. We recommend it as a lower-division (Plebe or Yearling) course. Estimating 18 cadets per section taught over two semesters, eight faculty members would be required to staff this course. Faculty would represent the disciplines of sociology and social psychology primarily, but we could certainly invigorate the course and USMA with a criminologist, anthropologist, and diversity studies scholar. The faculty who teach this course would provide a critical mass of subject matter experts on social, cultural, management, and diversity issues important to USMA and the Army.

6. The POC for this memorandum is Dr. Morten G. Ender at 845.938.5638 or [morten.ender@usma.edu](mailto:morten.ender@usma.edu).

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Colonel, US Army  
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