

UCAR

Statement of Unity

Statement of the Problem

Recent months have witnessed the upsurge in blatant and vicious racism both locally and nationally. On the University of Michigan campus two recent incidents typify this trend. On January 27th several Black students were meeting in Couzens dormitory when a KKK-type flyer was slipped under the door of the room, declaring "open hunting season" on "porch monkeys" and "Saucerlips." The second incident occurred on February 4th when a student disc jockey aired an anti-Black radio program over a University-sponsored station. One of the racist "jokes" aired during the program was: "Why do Black people smell? So blind people can hate them too." Unfortunately there have been numerous other instances of overt racism on campus as well including the repeated violent attacks on the anti-apartheid snanty; physical and verbal assaults upon Black and Asian American students; racist graffiti; and the display of a KKK uniform in a Couzens dorm window.

These increasingly blatant manifestations of racism have not been confined to U-M's campus. Throughout the Reagan tenure in general and more intensely over the past year there has been a significant increase in blatant, violent assaults upon people of color in this country, especially Afro-Americans. While clearly racism has been a constant theme throughout American history it does take different forms in different periods. Today racism is becoming even more blatant and unabapogitic. In addition to individual acts of racism, institutional racism continues to perpetuate discrimination and racial disparity and to foster a climate in which racist violence is more likely to occur. On the national level, the appointment of a vapid racist as chief of the Supreme Court, and a callous conservative as head of the Civil Rights Commission; the reduction of social services to the

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poor (disproportionately made up of racial minorities); the erosion of civil rights and Affirmative Action gains; and the Administration's continued collaboration with the racist regime in South Africa all contribute to a growing climate of open racism. This is climate that gave rise to the Klan attack on civil rights marchers in Forsyth County; the brutal vigilante murder of Michael Griffith in Howard Beach, NY; the mob beatings of Black students at University of Massachusetts and dozens of similar incidents across the country.

Institutionalized racism, however, is not the exclusive domain of the Republican government in Washington. We see manifestations of institutionalized racism in the policies and practices of the University administration as well. Examples of how the University contributes to a climate of racism and demonstrates insensitivity to the needs and concerns of minority students include:

- the fact that Black students constitute a mere 5% of the student population, despite a stated University promise of 10% Black enrollment 17 years ago, as a concession to the B.A.M. strike.
- the administration's unprincipled dismissal of the nomination of Nelson Mandela for an honorary degree last year despite strong recommendations of Black faculty, students and others.
- the fact that there is no visible formal mechanism for reporting incidents of racial harassment experienced by students on staff.
- the racially polarized labor hierarchy which concentrates white men in the highest paying University jobs and Black women in the lowest.
- the University's refusal to observe the Martin Luther King holiday by closing its offices and canceling classes.

- the fact that of 69 University department chairs, none are Black; of the 31 associate and assistant department chairs, none are Black; and only 2% of tenured faculty are Black.

- the fact that there are no empowered advocates for minority students within the University bureaucracy. Minority Student Services, for example, reports to a building director rather than the President or a Vice-President.

These are only a few of the tacit forms of racism that exist all around us each day on this campus. It is our position that racism is intolerable and must be combatted in all of its many forms with all of the strength and resources we can muster.

Statement of Purpose

Many organizations and individuals at the U-M have been struggling simultaneously against the many forms of racism that confront us. On this campus. These efforts have intensified in recent months as the manifestations of racism have become more blatant and intense. The seriously racist and increasingly dangerous political climate that exists on this campus and throughout the country demands that our response to these attacks be equally serious.

Despite the fact that there has been a great deal of anti-racist activity at Michigan, many of our efforts have been parallel and overlapping. Since it appears as though the racist and right-wing forces in this society are mobilizing and coalescing at an alarming rate, we clearly have no choice but to do the same. It is in this context that we have formed the United Coalition Against Racism, a coalition of progressive organizations and individuals. By bringing together all the various anti-racist forces on campus and forging a strong unified coalition, around an

agreed upon set of demands, we intend to make a forceful political statement which can no longer be ignored.

Historically, a key strategy to undermine our respective struggles has been to keep us divided, operating at odds and unable to speak in a unified voice. This leaves power clearly in the hands of those who do not share our goals and objectives. The University administration has been able to dole out token responses to various issues and blatantly ignore others, under the guise of trying to accommodate a "cross-section" of students and "interests." The current situation demands that we strive for the highest level of unity and solidarity possible. Therefore our coalition will be multi racial and will attempt to include all progressive and anti-racist forces on campus. At the same time, however, we clearly recognize and respect the importance of Black and Third World leadership. Just as we could not imagine a women's movement led by men, we cannot have an anti-racist movement led predominately by whites. Therefore, leadership and direction of the coalition's activities should come primarily from students of color.

Specifically, we intend to respond forcefully and cohesively to the increased incidents of racial harassment on campus and to press the University to act on these as well as our on-going list of anti-racist demands. This effort would hopefully expand upon other coalition efforts already underway to encompass an even broader group of allies. This coalition of groups and individuals will 1) develop strategies to push for the list of demands outlined in our platform, 2) begin to log and document all instances of racist harassment, threats etc. that have occurred on campus over the past year. 3) meet with lawyers to explore the possible option of either civil rights or criminal litigation against individuals or

possibly the university itself for not guaranteeing a safe and non-
threatening atmosphere within which students of color can pursue their
studies.