

From: **James E. Enstrom** <jenstrom@ucla.edu>
Date: Fri, Oct 23, 2020 at 2:00 PM
Subject: Serious Alumni Concerns About HMC Department of Physics
To: Theresa W. Lynn <Theresa_Lynn@hmc.edu>
Cc: Brian J. Shuve <bshuve@hmc.edu>

October 23, 2020

Theresa Wan-Zhen Lynn, PhD
Worster Professor and Chair of Physics
Harvey Mudd College Department of Physics
Theresa_Lynn@hmc.edu

Re: Serious Alumni Concerns about HMC Department of Physics

Dear Professor Lynn,

As a distinguished physics major from the HMC Class of 1965, I am shocked to read about the NON-physics priorities of the current HMC Department of Physics. Assistant Professor Brian Shuve organized a June 10, 2020 "Strike for Black lives" at HMC (<https://physics.hmc.edu/news/114/>). Also, he was a lead author of the *Particles for Justice* "Call to Action: Strike for Black Lives" (<https://www.particlesforjustice.org/>), which was supported by the four youngest HMC Physics Professors (Nicholas Breznay, Sharon Gerbode, Mark Ilton, and Brian Shuve) and by five other HMC Professors (Lori Bassman, Jim Boerkoel, Erika Dyson, Jae Hur, and Ben Wiedermann).

The *Particles for Justice* Call to Action makes exaggerated and incorrect claims that reflect badly on the honesty and objectivity of its supporters. Regarding the claim that "The recent **murders** of Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery are just a few examples of the violence and racism that Black people live with every day," there is NO proof that these persons were **murdered**. For instance, the Grand Jury assessing the death of Breonna Taylor charged one police officer with "wanton endangerment" and did not charge the two other officers at all. There have been NO convictions in this case. The *Particles for Justice* supporters need to learn that **murder** is "the **unlawful premeditated killing** of one human being by another."

Instead of engaging in the academic strike called for by *Particles for Justice* and #ShutDownSTEM, HMC Physics Professors should express concern about 1) the current efforts to undermine science and the scientific method, as described by prominent physicist Lawrence Krauss in his July 12, 2020 Wall Street Journal commentary "The Ideological Corruption of Science" (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-ideological-corruption-of-science-11594572501>); 2) the irreproducibility crisis in science (<https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/conference-follow-up-fixing-science>); and 3) the silencing of "politically incorrect" views at HMC (<http://www.scientificintegrityinstitute.org/HMCBlock011219.pdf>).

Several early HMC graduates have assembled disturbing evidence that HMC has changed its original focus on academic excellence to a focus on “diversity ueber alles” (<http://www.scientificintegrityinstitute.org/HMCBob080720.pdf>). Consequently, HMC has declined in academic stature and is no longer a college that provides an objective high quality STEM education (<http://www.scientificintegrityinstitute.org/JEEHauser080520.pdf>). Specifically regarding physics, there has been a dramatic decline in the proportion of HMC graduates who earn a BS and a PhD in physics (<http://www.scientificintegrityinstitute.org/HMCPhysics021219.pdf>).

I hope you will carefully examine the above evidence because it is highly relevant to the future of HMC. I welcome your response.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

James E. Enstrom, PhD, MPH
Co-Valedictorian and Physics Major, HMC Class of 1965
1965 Thomas B. Brown Memorial Award
Retired UCLA Research Professor (Epidemiology) and
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cc: Bruce W. Worster, PhD
Physics Major, HMC Class of 1964
1964 Thomas B. Brown Memorial Award

Brian J. Shuve, PhD
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<https://physics.hmc.edu/news/114/>

Brian Shuve co-organizes a strike for Black lives

10 June 2020



For some researchers, last week's statements from institutions in support of [#BlackLivesMatter](#) didn't go far enough. "Calls for justice and centring Black lives were met with watered-down statements promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives that have proven ineffective," says Brian Shuve, a physicist at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California, and a member of [Particles for Justice](#). "We wanted our fields and institutions to take collective action and do better."

The strike is happening on Wednesday, 10 June 2020 and is described on the [Particles for Justice website](#) and on the [Shut Down STEM website](#).

Read more from the story published on the [Nature website](#). (Photo Credit: David Cliff/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty)

[Key names and words below have been highlighted in RED]

<https://www.particlesforjustice.org/>

Wednesday, June 10: A Strike For Black Lives

#STRIKE4BLACKLIVES #STRIKEFORBLACKLIVES
#SHUTDOWNSTEM

WHO ARE THE PARTICLES FOR JUSTICE?

A note from the authors: We understand that there are members of our communities who are engaged in time-sensitive activities due to COVID-19 and that these are a matter of life and death. We do not see continuing these activities as being in conflict with the spirit of the call below.

CALL TO ACTION:

It should go without saying that Black lives matter. Yet we find ourselves again mourning and raging over state and vigilante violence against Black people. **The recent murders of Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery are just a few examples of the violence and racism that Black people live with every day** -- and have for centuries -- in the US, Canada, and around the world. We acknowledge the ways in which the effects of anti-Black racism are compounded for people who are also, for example, women, trans, non-binary, queer, Indigenous to the lands occupied by the United States and Canada, Latinx, Muslim, Jewish, disabled, and/or undocumented. We demand justice, reform, and accountability now.

Therefore, as physicists, we believe an academic strike is urgently needed: to hit pause, to give Black academics a break and to give others an opportunity to reflect on their own complicity in anti-Black racism in academia and their local and global communities. This [#strike4blacklives](#) is in dialogue with a call from colleagues in astronomy to [#shutdownSTEM](#) and [#shutdownacademia](#) for at least the day of June 10.

We recognize that our academic institutions and research collaborations -- despite big talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion -- have ultimately failed Black people. Demands for justice have been met with gradualism and tokenism, as well as diversity and inclusion initiatives that -- while sometimes well-intentioned -- have had little meaningful impact on the lived experiences of Black students, staff, researchers, and faculty. Black representation among physics faculty is non-existent at most institutions, and it is widely known that Black students often feel unwelcome, unsupported, and even unsafe in their physics departments and predominantly white campuses.

Anti-Blackness is pervasive throughout academia, and the number of students and faculty in particle physics and other subfields make this very clear. Moreover, anti-Blackness affects all aspects of Black peoples' lives. To steward a new generation of students, research staff, and faculty in physics means to acknowledge our collective responsibility to combat anti-Blackness, not just on campus, but also in the streets, in governance, and society at large. Ending white supremacy is a matter of urgency, yet far too often, instead of using power to question institutional practices and advocate for Black students, faculty and staff, many senior academics and administrators retreat to the Ivory Tower, disengaging from the pursuit of justice. Again, the fight against white supremacy -- in all of its manifestations -- is an urgent one, and we are clear that justice will not be achieved until Black people not only have the right to survive but also thrive.

We are conscious of the ways in which Black students and scholars, including two authors of this letter to the community, are expected to do the heavy lifting to advocate for and support justice and representation in academia. We know that this burden functions as an unfair and unevenly distributed barrier to their ability to thrive in academia. We call for a universal strike to give them a break and because those of us with the most privilege have the greatest responsibility to use that privilege to enact change. We must confront the institutional barriers to justice for Black people in academia and beyond, challenge the notion of the meritocracy whereby "objective and neutral" criteria infused with systemic racism are used to exclude Black people from physics and other academic disciplines, and rebuild our institutions and collaborations in a way that is just and equitable.

Importantly, we are not calling for more diversity and inclusion talks and seminars. We are not asking people to sit through another training about implicit bias. We are calling for every member of the community to commit to taking actions that will change the material circumstances of how Black lives are lived -- to work toward ending the white supremacy that not only snuffs out Black physicist dreams but destroys whole Black lives. In calling for a strike, we call on people who are not Black to spend a day undertaking discussion and action that furthers this work, while providing Black scientists with a day of rest. Every single institution around the world can and should get involved in this work, and the strike marks an opportunity to recommit to the humanist values which should underpin academic work, including the belief that Black Lives Matter.

Strike Details

Authors

Foregrounding our Black members (in alphabetical order) who developed this idea, and then all other authors (in alphabetical order).

Brian Nord (Fermilab and University of Chicago) ([click here for a personal statement](#))
Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (University of New Hampshire) ([click here for a personal statement](#))
Matthew Buckley (Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey)
Kyle Cranmer (New York University)
Djuna Croon (TRIUMF)
Daniel Harlow (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
Seyda Ipek (University of California, Irvine)
Sam McDermott (Fermilab)
Matthew Reece (Harvard University)
Nausheen Shah (Wayne State University)
Brian Shuve (Harvey Mudd College) [asst prof physics]
Tracy Slatyer (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
Tim M.P. Tait (University of California, Irvine)
Graham White (TRIUMF)
Tien-Tien Yu (University of Oregon)

We are no longer accepting pledges to strike. We still encourage everyone to participate in the strike, while acknowledging that this is only one of many days needed for education, and bold and meaningful action in support of Black lives and Black minds.

<https://www.particlesforjustice.org/additional-pledges>

Pledged Strike Participants

Final count: 5874 pledged strike participants as of noon EDT, June 10, 2020

Jim Boerkoel Harvey Mudd College	[assoc prof computer science]
Lori Bassman Harvey Mudd College	[prof engineering]
Jae Hur Harvey Mudd College	[asst prof biology]
Sharon Gerbode Harvey Mudd College	[assoc prof physics]
Nicholas Breznay Harvey Mudd College	[asst prof physics]
Jasper Weinburd Harvey Mudd College	[NSF Postdoctoral Fellow mathematics]
Albany Blackburn Harvey Mudd College	[physics major '23]
Erika Dyson Harvey Mudd College	[assoc prof humanities, religious studies]
Maxwell Thum Harvey Mudd College	[no clear position]
Mark Ilton Harvey Mudd College	[asst prof physics]
Ben Wiedermann Harvey Mudd College	[assoc prof computer science]
Matthew Fox Harvey Mudd College	[math-physics major '20]

[The 13 HMC Signers include the 4 youngest HMC Physics Professors and 5 other HMC Professors]