



gwaMIT's Commitments to Solidarity with Black Lives Matter and Black Graduate Womxn at MIT

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Graduate Womxn At MIT (gwaMIT) is committed to supporting Black graduate womxn at MIT and the Black Lives Matter movement through both immediate and long-term actions. We will leverage our resources to continually fight to make MIT a place where all Black womxn and students are supported in their professions and communities. There is no feminism without racial justice, and we commit ourselves to embracing intersectionality at every juncture.

Given that these are ongoing efforts, we have outlined our fixed commitments in black text. Below each commitment, we will provide updates in gray text.

Accountability

- Every gwaMIT Executive Board member will engage in work to dismantle anti-Black racism and white supremacist culture at MIT and in academia. There are many ways to contribute, and we all have a role to play.
 - Each Board member's particular responsibilities has been written into their [position descriptions](#) in the gwaMIT bylaws.
 - The Advocacy Co-Chairs will be responsible for oversight of these activities.
 - Every current and future incoming Board member will inform themselves of past and present advocacy efforts made by the MIT Black Graduate Students Association (BGSA) and Black Student Union (BSU), including the thorough, actionable [2015 recommendations](#) and the [additional 2020 recommendations](#).
 - gwaMIT will inquire about updates from BGSA at a minimum once per year as part of the Co-Chairs' annual effort to meet with external groups and administrative offices.
- We will be open and transparent about all of our efforts at internal and external reform.
 - Our commitments will be published on our website with proposed timelines. We will provide updates with details on our progress.
 - We will email our members at least once per semester with updates on our efforts.
 - Deadline for the Fall semester email update: December 15 annually
 - Deadline for the Spring semester email update: June 15 annually
- We welcome all feedback on our work from the MIT community.
 - Incoming Executive Co-Chairs and Advocacy Co-Chairs will proactively connect with other student groups at the beginning of each Board cycle to discuss

collaborative advocacy efforts and ensure we are acting as true partners with other campus leaders. The aforementioned Chairs will accept and document all feedback on our past and current efforts so that it may be reviewed by current and future Board members.

Student groups that we are committed to meeting with annually: BGSA, LGSA, LGBT Grad, GSC DEI

- The Board can be reached collectively by email at gwamit-exec [AT] mit [DOT] edu or through this [anonymous suggestions form](#).

Reform

- gwaMIT will leverage its power as an organization to advocate for institutional reforms at MIT.
 - We will work with gwaMIT's Department Representatives (Reps) to create sustainable advocacy channels at the department level. Reps will be responsible for informing the Board of departmental student advocacy groups' efforts and vice versa. We will guide Reps on how to communicate with department heads and lead initiatives within their departments. In particular, as part of Reps' advocacy efforts, we will ensure that their work advances the BGSA recommendations.
 - We will amplify public petitions created by BGSA by circulating them through our general membership and departmentally via our Reps.
 - We will work with the Institute Community & Equity Office (ICEO) and graduate student leaders across campus to develop and implement a plan to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion work by faculty into hiring and tenure consideration as well as accountability measures into faculty codes of conduct. The gwaMIT Advocacy Co-Chairs will be part of GSC DEI's monthly conversations with the ICEO.
- We will confront [white feminism](#) within our Board and through events with our membership.
 - During the beginning of each new Board cycle, the Board will participate in a mandatory reading and discussion group on both intersectional feminism and white feminism. Following the reading period, the Board will have a reflective discussion on how gwaMIT can be more inclusive. We will critically evaluate previous gwaMIT events to consider their motivations and assumptions. We will publish on our website the annual reading lists from the discussions that pertain to improving gwaMIT and womxn's advocacy in academia.
Our goal is to publish the reading & watching lists by the start of the fall semester each academic year.
 - In Fall 2020, we will publish a Mission and Values statement. This statement will be revisited by the Board on an annual basis in light of what we learn during the reading period.
 - We will continue to partner with the Graduate Student Council Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (GSC DEI) Committee to host peer-facilitated dialogues around race, intersecting identities, privilege, and social justice. This is part of the GSC DEI Fellows program and gradCommunity Dialogue Series founded by GSC DEI, through which graduate student facilitators will undergo rigorous training (from the [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#)). We will hold at least one of these events per semester.

Start of community dialogue partnership: 12/10/2019

Training suspended due to COVID-19. Updates will be provided as soon as they are available.

- We will include literature and resources on our website for our members on how to implement anti-racist feminism.
Deadline to publish: 12/15/2020
- Our Board must reflect the diversity of the graduate student body. We will prioritize building partnerships with communities of Black womxn graduate students to bring equitable representation to the Board. We recognize that many Black graduate students already make significant commitments to organizations at MIT; we will listen to Black womxn who engage with gwaMIT events about whether leadership in gwaMIT would be an overcommitment and whether they would feel welcomed and supported on the gwaMIT Board.

Our events and platform

- gwaMIT's events must celebrate the experiences and amplify the voices of womxn from diverse backgrounds.
 - For events with speakers and panelists, our first priority will be to host womxn who are members of [underrepresented and minoritized racial and ethnic groups](#). We will especially focus on increasing the representation of Black womxn as speakers.
 - Organizers will invite several womxn from underrepresented backgrounds for each event when searching for speakers, and the process of contacting potential speakers will be recorded in writing in planning documents for transparency.
 - We will contact womxn from diverse professional backgrounds in order to avoid placing an undue burden of service on Black womxn at MIT.
 - We will publish demographics statistics of the speakers at all of our events, to the extent that speakers are comfortable publicly disclosing this information.
 - We will use events based on artistic engagement (e.g. museum visits, film screenings, book clubs) to celebrate works made by Black womxn.
 - We will send post-event surveys to attendees to collect data on the event experience and climate.
 - We will reflect on whether and how speakers fostered an inclusive environment, and document our reflections.
- We will partner with BGSA to host collaborative events that center the needs and experiences of Black graduate womxn.
 - In order to avoid creating surplus service work for Black graduate womxn while still listening to Black womxn's voices, gwaMIT Board members will first do research on several potential event types and then consult BGSA leaders about those proposals. gwaMIT will perform the organizational tasks and provide funding for these events (to be included in our annual budget).
 - As requested by BGSA, gwaMIT will provide publicity for events independently planned by BGSA, and will contribute funding as our budget allows.
- We will seek to provide food for our events from local restaurants owned by Black womxn.

We are currently compiling information on local Black-owned restaurants in order to find establishments that can provide catering for a wide range of dietary needs with costs that are within our events and conference budgets.
- We will use our online platform to:

- increase the representation of Black womxn scientists and leaders in featured news and profiles in our newsletter.
- incorporate events from around the Boston area on Black womxn's professional development and on intersectional feminism into our online calendar.

Mentorship and outreach

- To contribute to reforming the educational system beyond MIT, the Board will establish a Diversity & Outreach Committee with non-Board graduate womxn to help implement long-term outreach initiatives. Details of the initiatives described below are provided in gwaMIT's Diversity & Outreach Committee [description](#).
 - We will contribute to establishing long-term application assistance programs in each MIT department that will pair Black undergraduate womxn with MIT graduate womxn in their field of specialization.
 - We will create a mentorship program pairing graduate womxn at MIT with undergraduate womxn (not limited to MIT) who are members of underrepresented and minoritized racial and ethnic groups. Mentors will advise students on how to successfully navigate their undergraduate experiences.
 - We will host STEM engagement events at local middle and high schools in underserved communities and hold volunteering events with organizations that support Black girls' STEM education (e.g. [Black Girls Create](#), [Black Girls Code](#)).

Initial conversation with Black Girls Code: 06/17/2020