

Dear CMC Faculty, Staff, and Administrators,

This is a call to action to respond to the inadequate institutional support for students of marginalized identities at CMC. Students of institutionally marginalized communities at CMC demand a resource center. Additionally, two diversity/inclusion positions--one for students, one for faculty--must be hired *immediately* to begin providing support and programming for marginalized students. Given the time that this may take, interim directors from the faculty should be appointed. Members of the administration have already drafted job descriptions for such positions. It's time that they put their words into action. Our students are hurting.

The narratives in this document include a diversity of voices, reflecting the imperative need for a resource center and institutional positions that serve students of marginalized identities and their unique backgrounds and personal experiences. While this document is written from the perspective of CMCers of Color—the group that launched these efforts—this initiative is a collaboration between five CMC-specific affinity groups: the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA), Asian Pacific American Mentors (APAM), Brothers and Sisters Alliance (BSA), GenU, and CMCers of Color.

Over the past seven months, several CMC students of color have been in communication with the administration and shared [a list of ways the administration can better support students of color](#). However, to the detriment of students of color and other marginalized students who continue to be without necessary resources, the administration has failed to address our concerns. We have come to realize while our original list was specific to students of color, students of all marginalized identities benefit from our recommendations.

Our efforts began on February 12, 2015, when a group of approximately 30 students of color had a closed dialogue to share their experiences at CMC. Some of the words used by the students to describe how their identity affected their experience at CMC were: “**misunderstood**,” “**intimidated**,” “**don’t belong**,” “**fragmented**,” “**excluded**,” “**daunting**,” “**conflicted**,” “**isolated**,” and “**scared**.” Students reported feeling a strong pressure to assimilate and an inability to fully express their racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and religious identity. Students of color mentioned having to resort to other campuses to obtain support and culturally relevant resources.

Students have also reported feeling marginalized inside the classroom through microaggressions, racially insensitive professors, and curriculums that exclude narratives of color. Students have been asked by professors to represent their entire racial group—a problematic idea, as one person cannot fairly represent, and should not be able to represent, an entire group. Students have reported professors constantly mistaking them for another student of color in the class, which is deeply invalidating, as it shows students that their teachers characterize and distinguish them by their skin color and not by their personhood. Students expressed a desire to have more comprehensive sensitivity trainings for current faculty, as well as a desire to see more faculty that share their backgrounds.

A [recent article in the TSL](#) described that the 2007 class cohort had the lowest graduation rate for black students at any of the Claremont Colleges. The issues of students of color leaving CMC is exacerbated by the fact that there are so few students of color. When one student of color leaves, regardless of the reason, it impacts the entire CMC community. On an anecdotal basis, many alumni and current students have thought about transferring and have known others who have already done so.

All of these experiences are symptomatic of inadequate institutional support for students of color and students of other marginalized identities and backgrounds at CMC. Every Claremont College, except CMC, has a resource center catered toward marginalized students. Harvey Mudd has the Office of Institutional Diversity; Pomona has the Women's Union and Asian American Resource Center; Pitzer has Center for Asian Pacific American Students; Scripps has Scripps Communities of Resources and Empowerment, which provides resources for students across identities. Resource centers and spaces meant to serve the 5Cs, such as OBSA, CLSA, and SOCA, are centered at Pomona and lack CMC student representation. The CMC student experience is so unique, and thus, we need resources tailored to CMC students. The few identity-based groups on campus, such as APAM, SAGA, BSA, and GenU, do not receive institutional funding. These organizations go through the same process of receiving funding as any other student organization, despite providing valuable resources that the administration has repeatedly failed to provide. The funding for these groups is dependent on the discretion of a student position within ASCMC that changes each year. If leadership in ASCMC decides that these groups are not as essential as another student group, a vital resource is taken away from many marginalized students. This instability has often led to added stress and restrictions on the resources that identity-based student groups are able to provide.

Furthermore, the permanent deans in the Dean of Students Office—meant to be the closest administrative body to students—are all white, despite the growing racial diversity of the student body. The position of Chief Civil Rights Officer/Title IX Coordinator is inadequate to serve students of marginalized identities, as its main goal is not meant to mentor or to program, but rather to do the important work of dealing with hate-crimes and responding to Title IX cases. The work that the Civil Rights Officer does is overwhelming as it stands. If we expect one person to handle the needs of students of marginalized identities and students suffering from hate crimes, it would be an injustice to both groups. Students with marginalized identities thus have no place and no one to go to share concerns and receive support.

Students of marginalized identities often hear that our narratives and experiences are not enough to demand change. We fundamentally disagree. Often times, our experiences and feelings are evident of a larger systemic problem that cannot be easily explained in words. However, there are many examples that point to the problems at CMC. Below is a list of aggressions towards students of marginalized identities in the past two years. While some of the events involve individual mistakes, the solution is not to chastise individuals, rather to change the culture of CMC.

From administration:

- In 2013, in Stark Hall, Queer Resource Center posters were vandalized repeatedly, particularly during Gaypril. In this incident, someone tore up/destroyed the posters and left offensive words and notes in their place. At first, Dean of Students expressed sympathy to students who brought these incidents to their attention, but ultimately did nothing.
- In 2013, a CMC student posted an anti-LGBTQ hate speech online. When numerous students brought this up to Dean of Students, they were dismissed, and inadequate resources were offered to change campus climate or supporting hurt students.
- At a Students for Justice in Palestine protest in 2013, a student of color was called a cockroach by a professor. The student of color claimed that the professor violated “two CMC college policies as stated in the college's Faculty Handbook: section 4.2, which maintains that professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students [and] hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards, and section 10.6.2, which states, It is the policy of Claremont McKenna College to maintain an environment for students, faculty, and staff that is free of sexual, racial and other unlawful harassment Retaliation against a person who properly reports, complains about, or participates in the investigation of such harassment is likewise prohibited.” For more information click [here](#).
- In a social psychology course in 2014, a student reported that, during an implicit bias test, many students in the class joked about their racism. Instead of interfering or using this opportunity to discuss how implicit bias has often been used to justify violence against people of color, the professor laughed and began a discussion about whether or not people should even try to unlearn their implicit bias.
- In 2015, a class president sent an email that many students of color viewed as anti-black and gave their presidential speech mocking black culture. When black students were going to write a response bringing attention to the class president’s discriminatory actions, administrators advised them against it, insinuating that by voicing their concerns, black students were doing more harm than good. Many black students reported feeling silenced and since have not brought the event to the public’s attention.
- In 2015 in Auen Hall, Black Lives Matter posters were defaced. Other dorms had their posters defaced as well; the administration made no comment and did not reach out to black students in response.
- In early 2015, multiple students reported a clear bias that their economics professors had toward people from low-income backgrounds. Professors were reported using terms, like “Welfare Queen” unironically, which are deeply classist and racist. Furthermore, students reported economics professors chastising poor people in their classes.
- According to the 7C Asian American Student Survey, Asian American students at CMC reported feeling pressured to assimilate and disregard their ethnic and racial identities.
- At a new faculty and staff training in August, members of CMCers of Color attended the new faculty and staff meeting, at which they were given a few minutes to introduce

themselves. A new faculty member asked for examples of microaggressions, reflecting the lack of comprehensive training on racial sensitivity. Shortly after the students began sharing negative experiences students of color had experienced in CMC classrooms, an administrator ended the discussion with “but it’s getting better” and ushered them away.

- The First Year Guide and RA training schedule created by Dean of Students included visits to OBSA and CLSA but not the Asian American Resource Center. Many students of color felt that DOS’ exclusion of Asian American-specific resources perpetuated the incorrect and problematic belief that Asian American students do not suffer from discrimination and racism and thus do not need resources.
- In October of 2015, when a student posted on the Claremont McKenna College official Facebook page about her [experience as a low-income woman of color at CMC](#), her comment was made private twice. CMC Public Affairs office intentionally silenced this student of color when she tried to make her experience publically known. Furthermore, a dean in the Dean of Students office reached out to said student to offer support, but wrote that the student of color “did not fit the CMC mold”.
- There is a current class on crime and public policy—topics that are deeply racialized—that does not offer readings with perspectives of people of color.
- There is a current class on the civil war that simulated the pros and cons of slavery; many students of color viewed this discussion to be extremely insensitive and hurtful.
- Students of low to middle-income backgrounds have continuously reported little to no guidance from the Financial Aid office. As result, the financial aid process is especially difficult for first generation students. GenU, the first generation club on campus, has asked for workshops and assistance navigating the financial aid process and has yet to receive a response.
- In 2015, a student of color shared a photo of white CMC students wearing racist Halloween costumes to highlight the discrimination students of color face at CMC on a daily basis. In response to concerns raised by a student complicit in the photo, the administration responded by asking the student if they had considered taking down the photo, but not once asked how this incident affected the student of color and how they could be better supported.
- In 2015, after a student of color expressed to prospective students that she felt that CMC’s Admissions Office misrepresented the experiences of students of color at CMC, an admissions officer sent her an email saying that her statements were “factually incorrect” and “extremely misguided.”

From the student body:

- In 2013, ASCMC offered students the opportunity to vote for a party theme, one of which was “Bros, Pilgrims, and Navajos.” Read more [here](#).
- In 2014, former ASCMC student body president suggested an Indian-themed wedding party, which outraged and hurt a number of South Asian students at the colleges.

- In 2014, during a class, a CMC student was called a homophobic slur by another CMC student for their gender expression.
- In 2015, ASCMC used a photo that included depictions of slavery as the Facebook event photo for Pirate Party. Find more on that [here](#).
- In 2015, students of color were kicked out of lounges, which they reserved through proper avenues, so white students could throw a party.
- In 2015, a mural of Black Lives Matter painted by the Brothers and Sisters Alliance on Walker Wall was vandalized.
- In 2015, despite multiple emails from ASCMC and the Chief Civil Rights Officer, as well as a photo campaign urging students to reconsider wearing culturally appropriative or offensive costumes, white students at CMC donned racist “Mexican” costumes.
- In 2015, an unknown person defaced a “I support trans rights” sign on the door of a student’s dorm room. The word “trans” was scribbled out and replaced with the word “cis.” This happened in Beckett Hall, a gender neutral dorm on CMC’s campus. Although administration is aware of the offense, they haven’t released a statement.

It is important to note that these narratives are not representative of all students with marginalized identities, and this list does not even begin to encompass all of the offensive and hurtful occurrences at CMC. However, the substantive number of students who have shared these experiences with us and the frequency of these occurrences highlight that the issue is beyond the individual and that is a nuanced institutional problem. We ask that the administration not get lost in the details of these events and in assigning guilt, but rather take responsibility as a whole for these actions and move forward with supporting students of marginalized identities.

Furthermore, unlike the administration, ASCMC has been incredibly responsive to the needs and demands of marginalized students. They have worked quickly and tirelessly to implement changes that not only respond to the needs of students of color, but also pick up where the administration has failed. Furthermore, the differences between ASCMC and the administration are great: while ASCMC’s problematic behavior is from ignorance, it has approached each of these incidences with a willingness to learn and grow, whereas the administration knowingly ignores, silences, and deflects the concerns of students of color and marginalized identities.

The underlying problem is that oftentimes students of color and students of marginalized identities not only feel invalidated, but they also have nowhere to go. After our initial meeting, about twenty students of color met to finalize a letter listing actions regarding ways to improve the racial climate at CMC. This letter was sent to ASCMC and the Administration with the signatures of approximately 120 students, including students of color, white allies, and alumni who echoed our experiences, feeling that little had changed since their time here.

Over the past seven months, we have met with several administrators, including President Chodosh, and are deeply concerned about the lack of commitment the administration has shown to our efforts.

Here is a very brief summary of meetings and interactions we have had with various administrators:

- **April 9th, 2015**, – CMCers of Color sent President Chodosh and ASCMC the letters and a petition, with signatures from current and alumni, that listed our proposed actions to better support students of color.
- **April 22nd, 2015**, – Members of CMCers of Color had a meeting with ASCMC's President Will Su and Vice President Iris Liu to discuss the proposed changes ASCMC can implement. They stated they had concerns that they needed to bring back to the rest of the executive board.
- **April 30th, 2015** – Members of CMCers of Color met with President Chodosh, Civil Rights Officer Nyree Gray, and Director of Academic Planning Dianna Graves to discuss the proposed actions on the letter. We shared our own experiences as students of color and handed President Chodosh studies that highlight the importance of the institution in supporting and maintaining diversity. The administration stated that the list was very vast in its scope and asked us what the most urgent and impactful resource students of colors needed was. We decided that a resource center for marginalized students was the most pressing issue. The administrators expressed excitement and affirmed the possibility of a space for a resource center.
- **May 3rd, 2015** – Members of CMCers of Color presented at ASCMC's weekly Executive Board meeting to demonstrate our support for the proposed changes. Nyree Gray was also present. After some debate, the Executive Board expressed support, and ASCMC has since taken initiative to implement all of our recommendations.
- **May 8th, 2015** – Members of CMCers of Color had another meeting with Nyree Gray and Dianna Graves. CMCers of Color outlined, in great detail, the ideological and physical needs of a resource center for marginalized students. It was made clear that this kind of space would not be available for another year. However, given the issues students of color faced (ex. being kicked out of rooms that we reserved through proper avenues), the administration suggested that a temporary space be reserved for students of color for the fall of 2015. We expressed our willingness and desire to be part of the mission statement drafting process. Administrators mentioned that they would be meeting with the Director of Facilities in early June to select a space.
- **June 15th, 2015** - Members of CMCers of Color sent an email, asking for updates on the resource center. We were assured that we would receive periodic updates during the summer, but had not received any up to this point.
- **June 22nd, 2015**- Members of CMCers of Color received no response to our previous email and thus followed up. We expressed our discouragement and disappointment from being ignored. We communicated that there were many students available during the entire summer break who would be willing to meet if needed. The administration responded to meet the following week.
- **June 28th, 2015** – Members of CMCers of Color met again with Nyree Grey and Dianna Graves to discuss the progress of the students of color resource center. We were assured, with a “95 percent certainty” that we would at least receive a temporary space in the

coming fall. We were also offered the opportunity to speak at the new faculty and staff training.

- **July 21st, 2015** – Members of CMCers of Color met with Vice President of Academic Affairs & Dean of Faculty Peter Uvin. Dean Uvin expressed his support, but also stated that there would be difficulty implementing both a faculty training on how to better serve marginalized students and a change to the evaluation forms that would allow students to comment on the professors’ racial insensitivity. Dean Uvin mentioned he would try to recruit more professors of color.
- **August 22nd - 23rd, 2015** - With no update about speaking at the new faculty and staff training, members of CMCers of Color followed up and asked for specifics. In response, we were told that we would have a few minutes to speak about our group and would have an opportunity to have a voluntary lunch with new faculty and staff in the future. (Update: no such lunch has happened yet.)
- **August 24th, 2015** –Members of CMCers of Color met with President Chodosh, Dianna Graves, and Nyree Gray to follow up on the resource center and other projects for the academic year. We were told that “issues of shared governance” made even a temporary space impossible. When we pressed President Chodosh to expand what exactly these issues were—in hopes that perhaps students could help find a solution—no definitive answer was given. We were handed a document outlining what CMC has done and will do within the next few years in terms of diversity and inclusivity, but the resource center was absent from the list. Another action supported by students of color was the creation of a diversity chair position in the Dean of Students. We were assured we would hear more about the feasibility of creating position this position in four to six weeks. We have not heard anything since. Furthermore, many of the inclusivity efforts listed on the document handed to us were actually done by off-campus organizations as a favor to CMC or current students who went above and beyond their capacity as students.

To summarize, before we left for the summer, administrators assured students that they would find a temporary resource center for students of color for the Fall 2015 semester. Despite following up multiple times with administrators over the summer about the resource center, communication was limited on the administration’s part. A week before the semester started, administrators confirmed our suspicions that they found a space, but decided against it because of “issues of shared governance.” Despite letting on that they had spent an entire summer making progress, administrators were unable to specify a timeline for a permanent space, leading us to believe that the Administration does not see these resources and the students that have demanded them as a priority. It also became clear at our last meeting that members of the administration did not understand the value of race-specific resources for marginalized students of color. We ask, where is CMC's commitment to its marginalized students?

We bring this issue to your attention to seek immediate action on the Administration’s failure to respond to marginalized students’ demands for greater support. CMC students, as affinity group members, ASCMC representatives, and individuals, have gone above and beyond the call of action to provide resources to marginalized students. We have often times compromised both our own mental health and academics in the pursuit of providing marginalized students with the resources they desperately need. However, we have exhausted all the avenues within our power.

We sit on numerous committees, we have created student groups to build solidarity, and we have the overwhelming support of ASCMC. Campus culture usually changes slowly, and it is only with a resource center and institutionalized positions dedicated to serving the needs of marginalized students that we can hope to receive the support we need. A resource center for and administrative positions serving marginalized students will not only indicate to current students that the CMC administration cares and prioritizes our experiences and identities, but will also signal to future CMC students that their identities are valued, bolstered, and respected here. Together, the five affinity groups on campus have crafted this [document](#), detailing our vision as well as specifics for the resource center.

We demand a concrete commitment to our [proposals](#), which are both supported by the 2011 Campus Climate Task Force Report, alumni with marginalized identities, Sexuality and Gender Alliance, GenU, Brothers and Sisters Alliance, Asian Pacific American Mentors, and CMCers of Color. We want a formal written commitment to a permanent resource center as well as a temporary space, an immediate timeline, a funding proposal, and a mission statement crafting committee for the marginalized student resource center. We demand the immediate search for two diversity/inclusion positions for student affairs and faculty. We demand marginalized student voices to be at the center of all of these meetings.

To faculty, we expect your support especially in the classroom. Students across identities will be impacted by this letter. Several students chose to share their own personal experiences in creating this letter and will have their views questioned, especially by their peers. We anticipate that these conversations will not be easy ones and will be an added stressor to students of marginalized identities. We urge faculty to be sensitive to student capacities at this time by offering accommodations.

To Dean of Students and other responsible parties, we ask that you communicate to facilities that they should not remove our posters. Out of respect to our workers, members of these organizations will remove the flyers themselves after a week has passed.

For those administrators and professors who have not been involved in the efforts to create a resource center, you are not absolved of contributing to the discrimination and indifference that marginalized students have faced at CMC. Silence is oppression. We expect you to reflect on our proposals and implement swift and impactful changes to make your departments more inclusive, supportive, and accessible to students of marginalized identities. To the department heads receiving this letter: if you stand in solidarity with us, please forward this to all the faculty in your department. We ask you to hold an emergency meeting to discuss how to better support marginalized students and to affirm our efforts and need for a space.

Do not tell us you stand with us. Show us.

Sincerely,
CMCers of Color
Brothers and Sisters Alliance (BSA)
Sexuality And Gender Alliance (SAGA)

Asian Pacific American Mentors (APAM)
GenU