Race, Class, and Power: University Course on the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

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SEEDS You Choose Leadership Award Application
1. **Abstract:**
Funding is sought to sponsor the development and implementation of a University Course that explores the current struggle for racial justice in the United States, reflected at the micro-level through events like the Charlottesville demonstrations and the phenomenon of athlete protests, and at the macro-level through the #BlackLivesMatter movement. As an interdisciplinary endeavor, this course will encourage dialogue and cohesion among faculty and students across the University in a manner responsive to calls for the University to more affirmatively engage racial justice through our teaching, research, and service mission.

2. **Activity Goals:**
In the years since the shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown, in Ferguson, MO, the #BlackLivesMatter movement has emerged as a rallying cry and galvanizing force in the struggle for racial justice. The issues raised, however, by Brown’s death, the grand jury acquittal of his killer, the ensuing protests and riots in Ferguson, and the emergence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, encompass not just race. Rather, broader issues of identity, class and power are also implicated, particularly as manifested in American social phenomena of school and residential segregation, raced and classed public welfare policy, poverty capitalism, limited political representation, the intersection of conscious and subconscious racism, and police presence in minority communities. Exploration of these issues becomes only more urgent as demonstrations of white nationalism across the country, from college campuses to the office of the executive, multiply in number.

The inaugural University course on these issues was held in Spring of 2017, and was a success. From student enrollment of just under fifty, to participation of over 20 faculty from both the Coral Gables and Medical campuses, to the positive press the course received, the goals of dialogue and engagement were met. Lecture topics included policing and criminal justice, comparative inquiry regarding race and identity, theories of social movements, education reform, healthcare and medicine, environmental justice, literature and artistic expression, law and legal reform, statistical data analysis, and more.

In its second run, the Course is again poised to effectively facilitate intellectual exploration of the cultural, historical, political, and psychological underpinnings of racial inequality, and movements calling for racial justice in the United States. By preparing members of the University community to more substantively engage the problem of race in their personal and professional spaces, the Course reflects University values of diversity and compassion, while also keeping with the University’s commitment to transforming lives through teaching.

Modeled after prior successful interdisciplinary programs at the University (e.g. course on The Hospital, course on The 1960s), this Course would again be taught by faculty in various schools and departments across the University. Teaching commitments already been secured from:

- Germane Barnes (Architecture)
The Course would also benefit from outside speakers who focus on urban politics and social movements, including:

- Cedric Johnson (Political Science, University of Illinois)
- Adia Harvey Wingfield (Sociology, Washington University)

Finally, the University Course on race and the #BlackLivesMatter movement has several goals, including interdisciplinary exchange among faculty who research different facets of racial inequality and struggle in the United States, academic engagement of students on issues of race, class, and power, and the contemplation of a larger and longer-term University-wide collaborative project on race and racial struggle in both Miami and the United States more broadly.

### 3. Personal Goals:
In my own research as a legal scholar, I focus on the interaction of identity and the law, with a particular focus on how both broaden or limit access to quality public education. In recent years, however, my work on identity and the law has expanded beyond education, to more general observations and insights about the role and functions of race in American society. My immediate goal in continuing this Course is to foster the interdisciplinary aspects of my scholarship, especially as it is informed by the work of sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and political scientists. More generally, designing, coordinating, and implementing this course further develops my leadership skills and organizational capabilities, putting me in contact with colleagues across the University as I navigate interdisciplinary curriculum development. Designing such a course also reflects my personal commitment to advancing racial and social justice in my capacity as an educator, a faculty citizen of the University, a resident of the city of Miami, and a participant in America’s democratic project.

### 4. Budget:
$1,700 is requested:

- $1,200 (dinner hosted for faculty participants)
- $1,000 (round-trip flights for two outside speakers)
- $ 700 (accommodations for two outside speakers, 2 nights, Sonesta, Coconut Grove)
- Remaining balance ($1,200) will come from SEEDS funding carried over from a 2015 SEEDS award