

Dear Stanford Law School Administration,

We, the Stanford Black Law Students Association, will no longer participate in formal recruitment efforts organized by Stanford Law School. We are deeply disappointed and frustrated with the administration's handling of division within the law school community. BLSA is dedicated to supporting and guiding Black law students. However, presenting ourselves as aligned with the administration would be insincere and conflict with our organizational values. As a logical next step, we formally communicate our decision to boycott official admit events for the SLS Class of 2026.

Stanford's administration has actively marginalized its Black community, most recently by scapegoating Dean Tirien Steinbach in an apology to Judge Duncan. The failure of the University to stand on its proclaimed values of diversity, equity, and inclusion is apparent and concerning to us. Dean Martinez and President Tessier-Lavigne's statements continuously minimize Duncan's behavior and the impact of his work. As a result, Dean Steinbach, the people for whom she advocated, and the law school's DEI values were all abandoned. The apology was intimately aligned with White supremacist practices, leaving our members ashamed of the institution we were once excited to attend.

In 2018, marginalized students led a "Racism Lives Here Too" campaign demanding sincere DEI efforts. The Stanford administration created Dean Steinbach's position as Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in response. Yet, after the insurrection of January 6th, 2021, a follow-up "White Supremacy Lives Here Too" campaign highlighted the administration's failure to meet most other demands. The administration's actions following the events on March 9th, five years after the original demands, indicate that there is no genuine intention to rectify past wrongs or remove inequality from the fabric of Stanford's law school. We want to acknowledge how Dean Steinbach was put in an inconceivable position and express disappointment with the University's refusal to support her and honor the tenets of DEI.

Stanford Law School has consistently failed to provide a supportive learning environment for its Black students. The Black community at SLS has suffered from the administrative constraints placed on both BLSA's capacity to create a safe space for its members and the ability of faculty like Dean Steinbach to support and advocate for SLS's students from historically exploited backgrounds. We have attempted to be involved in admissions and recruitment but have been consistently disregarded in the planning process. At present, SLS's admissions practices exclude society's most vulnerable communities, limiting the voices represented in the SLS community. These admission practices reproduce and reify White supremacy, classism, and colorism, hindering the advancement of the Stanford Law community and the legal profession more broadly.

These issues have directly led to our decision to boycott. We cannot, in good faith, participate in recruiting Black students into a community more concerned with palliating wealthy, White conservative donors than the "student-focused and community-inspired" legal education SLS promotes. The administration left our concerns unanswered and has deliberately ignored our attempts to bring them into a productive conversation, and as law students, we are human first and lawyers-in-training second. As such, we are hurt and profoundly dismayed by the administration's failure to put our safety at the forefront of their actions in the past month. Internet harassment, doxxing of fellow students, and the new culture of locked doors are just a few examples of the toxicity on our campus. With this in mind, we must

be open with prospective students as they determine their future learning environment. We remain hopeful that we can work with administration to make the institution more inclusive and accessible for Black students and our marginalized peers.

We encourage future leadership to give significant thought to the state of these issues when deciding whether to resume participating in formal recruitment. BLSA has historically contributed an extensive amount of free labor to assist the University in this task, but we are continually overlooked by the administration when it makes significant decisions—as evidenced by the institution’s condoning of Judge Duncan’s behavior. We urge the administration to facilitate a diverse, equitable, and inclusive space built on a practical anti-racist foundation rather than a hollow, fraudulent symbol of progress.

Many prospective students to whom we have spoken thus far have noted SLS’s lack of transparency and support with admitted students' weekend and have opted not to attend. This letter supports students who desire clarity and authenticity before committing to three years in an unfamiliar environment. We are sympathetic to those students, hope that our protest will signal to them and others with similar concerns that we are prepared to advocate on their behalf in any way we can, and believe their choice will be repeated by many in the future if the administration continues to ignore our calls.

We hope this letter will urge the administration to restructure its processes, lend credence to marginalized communities, and truly acknowledge and combat its practices of exploitation and domination moving forward. Sadly, we are not sanguine about the prospect of meaningful change between now and the enrollment deadline. **Based on the administration’s handling of DEI, we unequivocally share a vote of no confidence in the current state of the administration’s ability to the administration’s willingness to adequately consider and respect the needs of Black students and administrators.**

As an organization, we will continue supporting prospective students through independent, alternative programming as they make decisions. We will share our experiences authentically and encourage students to make the decisions that are most favorable for them because our primary mission has always been the wellbeing of Black student-lawyers. Nonetheless, we stand ready to work with the administration to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all students moving forward.

Sincerely,

The 2022-2023 SLS Black Law Students Association Executive Board