September 18, 2018

Dear RCD Community,

Welcome to the 2018-2019 academic year! We are looking forward to meeting all of you in class, and at the variety of campus events planned this year. Prof. Kerri Greenidge is the new Director of American Studies, and Prof. Amahl Bishara is the new Director of Minors. Prof. Adlai Murdoch continues as Director of Africana Studies. And Prof. Kris Manjapra is the incoming Director of the RCD.

As you may be aware, there are significant challenges facing the RCD this year and in coming years. But we are prepared to work, and even struggle together, towards our greater potential. This message outlines some of the paths to confront and overcome the challenges.

Background
The RCD was founded in 2014 as a consortium of pre-existing and newly-created programs. While American Studies and Latino Studies already existed on campus thanks to earlier struggles for curricular transformation at Tufts, it was through visionary student mobilization and faculty commitment from 2011-2012 onwards that Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, and Colonialism Studies were created.

The RCD was the response to a persistent lack at Tufts of coordinated studies of race, social inequalities, class, settler nationalism, colonialism, indigeneity, and postcolonial and diasporic cultures and resistance movements. The lack of diversity in the Tufts curriculum, and within faculty ranks, constituted nothing less than a crisis in 2011, prompting the call for an external review and the creation of a dean's working group.

Crucially, student activism led by members of Pan African Alliance in 2011-2012 and including other student groups, played a galvanizing role in the creation of Africana Studies in 2012. Similarly, students raised their voices to demand Asian American Studies, and Colonialism Studies.

And over the past years, student mobilization has justly demanded the creation of Native American and Indigenous Studies within the RCD. It is now one of our most pressing goals.

At the same time, we are also confronting a new set of challenges.

A Time of Challenge
The RCD stands in 2018-2019 at a moment of decision. In past years, we have seen the departures of eight faculty of color with expertise in the study of comparative race, colonialism, and diaspora. We have not only lost some of our leading faculty, but their departures have had a serious impact on the curricula of our five programs, most especially Africana Studies and Asian American Studies. We have some 50 fewer RCD courses on our books compared with two years ago.
Given the challenges, we are happy to report that university leaders – the deans, the provost, and the president – recognize the peril faced by RCD programs, and that this peril has implications for our whole campus. RCD programs are calibrated to pursue the comparative study of race, and the critical and intersectional analysis of societies and cultures. But, fundamentally, RCD study is grounded in the ethical and political mandate of social justice. And because of this core RCD mandate -- our core principle to reject the disavowal and denial of historical disequilibria and injustice, and to pursue the relational demands of social justice in our present -- the whole campus strives towards its greater potential if the RCD curriculum is strong, and structurally secure.

How you can help
This year, please participate in upcoming student and faculty collaborations, as together we seek to secure the RCD as an enduring visionary space for the interdisciplinary, comparative, and intersectional study of race, ethnicity, society, and culture, grounded in the mandate of social justice. We seek both your support and your participation. Please share ideas, approaches, and proposals that reflect your vision of what the RCD might become in the future.

We also encourage you to show your support for the RCD by your choices during course enrollment. Please support RCD classes, especially at this time of challenge!

Events
Our upcoming events include:

• Joint Open House with CHAT and the CSRD on September 27th, 3-5pm at CHAT, 48 Professors Row.

• Week-long celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day, Oct 8-12.

• RCD Campus Dinner on November 7th, 5pm-7pm, Alumnae Lounge.

• You'll also be receiving invitations to join RCD faculty for lunches in the Group of Six Houses over the coming year.

RCD Seminar Series
A set of very special engagements have been planned this semester in addition to the events mentioned above. The RCD Seminar will bring to campus seven dynamic scholars who have made pathbreaking contributions to the critical study of race, colonialism, and diaspora. The seminars include:

• Vivek Bald (MIT) and Zachariah Mampilly (Vassar) exploring themes of “Nation, Violence, and the Futures of Protest” on October 18.

• Minkah Makalani (UT Austin) and Paget Henry (Brown) discussing “Post-Slavery, Black Social Critique, and Oceanic Thought” on November 1.

• J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (Wesleyan), Alyosha Goldstein (UNM), and María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (NYU) converging around the themes of “Critical Indigenous Studies and Comparative Empire” on November 15.

Events will include ample time for audience interaction and are meant for our whole community.

Check out the poster attached to this message for more information. We invite everyone to attend and actively participate.

Putting the RCD on a stable footing is not an option, but a necessity. The very creation of the consortium was the response to a severe structural weakness in the Tufts curriculum. And we and the university have an ethical responsibility to support and strengthen RCD courses, especially given the histories we have lived, and the times
we are living. May we have many opportunities to work together this year to mold the vision of a flourishing RCD for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Kris Manjapra
Director, Consortium of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora; Associate Professor of History

Amahl Bishara
Director of Minors in Asian American, Colonialism, and Latino Studies; Associate Professor of Anthropology

Kerri Greenidge
Interim Director, American Studies Program; Lecturer in the Consortium of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora

Adlai Murdoch
Director of Africana Studies; Professor of Francophone Studies