

AFRICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES DEPARTMENT FACULTY

Statement on Pending Campus Carry Law
October 29, 2015

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In this country, which devalues black life as one of its founding principles, the expansion of citizens' rights to bear firearms facilitates the violent deaths of Blacks. Accordingly, the faculty of the African and African Diaspora Studies Department (AADS) opposes the implementation of Texas SB11. This law will allow the more than 800,000 Texas Concealed Handgun License holders to carry their concealed weapons into buildings on our campus.

Allowing firearms on campus places UT's Black population in a particularly vulnerable position. Many of us are concentrated spatially, politically, and intellectually in Black Studies. Ours is a particularly controversial discipline that deals with provocative themes such as anti-blackness, white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, economic oppression, and crosscutting differences and power. Black Studies grapples with these issues and the Black experience in general as a part of scholarly endeavors that aim to promote social justice and equity. Educational exchanges around such subject matter are often highly charged, difficult, and consequential. It is not uncommon for AADS faculty to be the object of documented threats and harassment in our offices and lecture halls. The presence of firearms will not only stifle the free exchange of ideas but can be the basis for deadly violence against us in these often fraught settings.

Moreover, African Americans are disproportionately affected by the saturation of our society by firearms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the death rate due to gun violence for Blacks is more than twice that of whites. Vigilante and extra-judicial killings of Black people, as well as the police-involved shootings that saturate our news coverage and our daily lives, point to the distinctly vulnerable position of Black people when it comes to firearm

violence. Applied to our situation here at UT, in the presence of firearms the probability that bullets will find us is higher than for any other campus population. At the same time, racial bias functionally excludes Black people from accessing the rights afforded by campus carry legislation, as we would be more likely than our white counterparts to be perceived as actionable threats by fellow citizens and police officers alike.

When it comes to Black lives and the matter of guns in UT buildings, the State and the University have a responsibility to protect and defend those who are most vulnerable. Therefore, we demand that firearms be banned in all spaces occupied by Black people on our campus.

We also stand with other groups on our campus who are often impacted by firearms and other forms of violence, particularly members of the University's LGBTQ community, other people of color, and all women. Accordingly, we would join with them in any request that guns be completely banned from the UT campus.

Signed (in alphabetical order):

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