



Barkley Leonard Hendricks,
[Sir Charles, Alias Willie Harris](#),
 1972, oil on canvas,
 William C. Whitney Foundation, 1973.19.1

“I look at an ant and I see myself: a native
 South African, endowed by nature with a
 strength much greater than my size so I might
 cope with the weight of a racism that crushes
 my spirit.”
Miriam Makeba

Dearest Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Trustees, and Friends of The Griot Institute for the Study of Black Lives and Cultures:

We write to you all as members of our “[beloved community](#)” – to use Dr. King’s conceptual framework and Toni Morrison’s literary creation that called for a society based on dignity and care for humanity. In the wake of the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor in just the last month – and too many others before them – we want to name and reflect on the layers of pain, anger, and sadness present within our community. It has been a trying two months and an intensely emotional two weeks.

We would like to pause and remind The Griot community to take time to reflect on what is happening in the nation and to know The Griot will continue to develop programming that addresses critical issues that arise in society around Black Lives and Cultures. Please look to us as a resource and think about the contributions and partnerships we might develop together.

In the midst of these traumas, which are part of the 400 year legacy of how this nation was founded, it is important to realize and say out loud to those we work and live with that we cannot be expected to do the work the larger society is responsible for creating and perpetuating and hence must be accountable for remedying. African Americans cannot fix what the nation’s ancestors broke and every successive generation has continued to uphold.

Many are asking what they should do. Right now, we must attend to our own well-being. We who live Black lives have all these emotions and thoughts from this racial-based, communal trauma, and we still have to get up and work every day. We, living in Black skin, must attend daily to processing these thoughts and emotions. African Americans are often labeled “strong” but it is a toxic failure to acknowledge that in fact that we are “tired” and “traumatized” from having to stuff our feelings down in order to [not offend](#) or [raise fear](#) in those we work and live in community with daily. In order to get out of bed, do our jobs, and fulfill our family responsibilities, we attend to the feelings of others in the world around us. That means as

we are constantly consoling our colleagues with feelings of [guilt, fear, and hurt feelings](#), we repeatedly have to neglect our own physical and mental health. No wonder we are so drained and exhausted!

It is important to point out that upholding racist behaviors and actions, even if you are not the perpetrator, just the silent bystander, you too are suffering trauma and likely exhaustion for covering up, explaining away, and ignoring your inner circle's racist comments. We need to use our pandemic time to collectively weep for how broken our nation is for most of us regardless of race. Maintaining a racist society is hard work. Is it worth the toll it takes? Once we begin to ask and answer such questions, we can commence our next steps.

The Griot aims to uphold its mission of educating and inspiring, while also honoring the Bucknell mission. At times like these, it is our responsibility as an institute to move the campus to the *leading edge* so that the university can lead rather than follow in its intellectual, artistic, and moral endeavors.

To create the society – and the Bucknell community – that we desire is to name, repudiate, and take action against racism and abuse in all forms. To actually teach ourselves how to do better and to be better humans, we all must engage in uncomfortable and generous examination and dialogue that will enable us all to become agents of change that is expansive and not exclusionary. It is a time to ask yourself what you need to do. It is time to read, listen, and learn. It is time to look deeper and examine the painful and uncomfortable. You will see what is wrong and you will begin to see how to remedy the broken pieces. This is not the time to ask Black people to teach you how to fix it all. This is unfair and not productive. Speaking openly and honestly is productive and taking black people's experiences seriously and not dismissing them is essential. We expect this for all of our beloved community members of all backgrounds.

As we all know, African Americans have contributed in critical and essential ways to every aspect of American life before, during, and after the nation's inception. The purpose of The Griot Institute is not solely to make known the brilliant new avenues Black intellectuals in all disciplines have paved as they thoughtfully blended the aesthetic and the critical, the scholarly and the artistic, the public and the private, the personal and the political, but also The Griot is here to catalyze the potential of Bucknell in working consistently and constantly in its need to repeatedly create and realize the beloved community.

Below we are providing several resources that we encourage you to begin reading in this larger collective effort to learn and construct a just and anti-racist nation. We will continue to add resources to The Griot Facebook Page throughout the summer for your benefit.

We hope that you all continue to social distance and wear masks as we continue also to live with COVID-19 in a way that allows us all to be back together in person as soon as possible. The Beloved Community is everywhere, and yet most impactful when we can meet in person.

We greatly appreciate your continued support as we move forward in the next year.

With Peace Amidst Uncertainty,

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