

The Journal community at Georgetown Law stands in solidarity with the Georgetown Black Law Students Association (BLSA) to condemn the recent actions and statements of Georgetown University Law Center Professors Sandra Sellers and David Batson. Both Professors taught a seminar with a single Black student, and their class was not graded anonymously. During a private meeting with Professor Batson, Professor Sellers was recorded stating, among other things, the following: “I end up having this angst every semester that *a lot of my lower ones are Blacks*. Happens almost every semester. And it’s like, *oh come on*. It’s some really good ones, but there are also usually some that are just plain at the bottom, it drives me crazy.” Professor Sellers’ tone was condescending and patronizing. In response, Professor Batson nodded in agreement several times and stated that “what drives [him] crazy is...the concept of how that plays out in whether that is [his] own perceptions playing in here with certain people” or “[his] own unconscious biases playing out in the scheme of things.”

Although Professor Sellers has since been terminated, it would be a mistake to believe that our work here is finished. This incident is a sad reminder that racism continues to exist even at reputable academic institutions like Georgetown Law. Professor Sellers’ comments plainly demonstrate her bias against Black students and their ability to achieve in a strenuous academic environment. Rather than acknowledging her responsibility to empower these students as an educator or her own role in causing the disparities in her class, Professor Sellers chose to attack the ability of the single Black student in her class and of the Black students in her previous classes.

Professor Batson, who nodded and affirmed Professor Sellers’ comments, has been placed on administrative leave, pending investigation. Oftentimes, covert racism thrives from the inaction of others, and Professor Batson’s response was insufficient in addressing the clear racial bias Professor Sellers exhibited. Georgetown Law must take action and affirmatively adopt concrete solutions to address the gaps in cultural awareness that are ever-present in the classroom and in the Georgetown Law community.

This entire incident would be abhorrent and unacceptable in any context but is especially poignant at Georgetown Law, an institution dedicated to the pursuit of justice. Rather than being evaluated on their individual merits, Black students continue to be judged based on the color of their skin, are unfairly viewed as representatives of their race, and encounter biased grading. Georgetown has chosen to sit on its hands in response to [past demonstrations of racism](#) by members of its faculty. This course of inaction cannot continue. Georgetown must act to stop such racial bias from continuing to poison its academic integrity.

The Journal community is uniquely positioned at the intersection between students, faculty, and scholarship. We are called upon to be gatekeepers and advocates for equity and equality, and we also call for Georgetown to critically assess and improve its subjective grading system and to hire more Black faculty and faculty of color. As Dean Treanor, Dean of Georgetown

Law, said last summer, “[w]e must recommit to the struggle for the equal treatment of all people and to the fight against racism in all its forms.” The actions taken against Professor Sellers and Professor Batson must mark the beginning of a comprehensive reckoning with the inequities Black students face at Georgetown every day. Our students deserve more action.

Sincerely,

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