

BLACK VISIONS CONFERENCE OVERVIEW



MARSHA P. JOHNSON

Celebrating and Healing
Black Transgender,
Non-binary, and
Queer Lives

Pay it no mind.

SPRING 2020 AT UC IRVINE

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OVERVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE

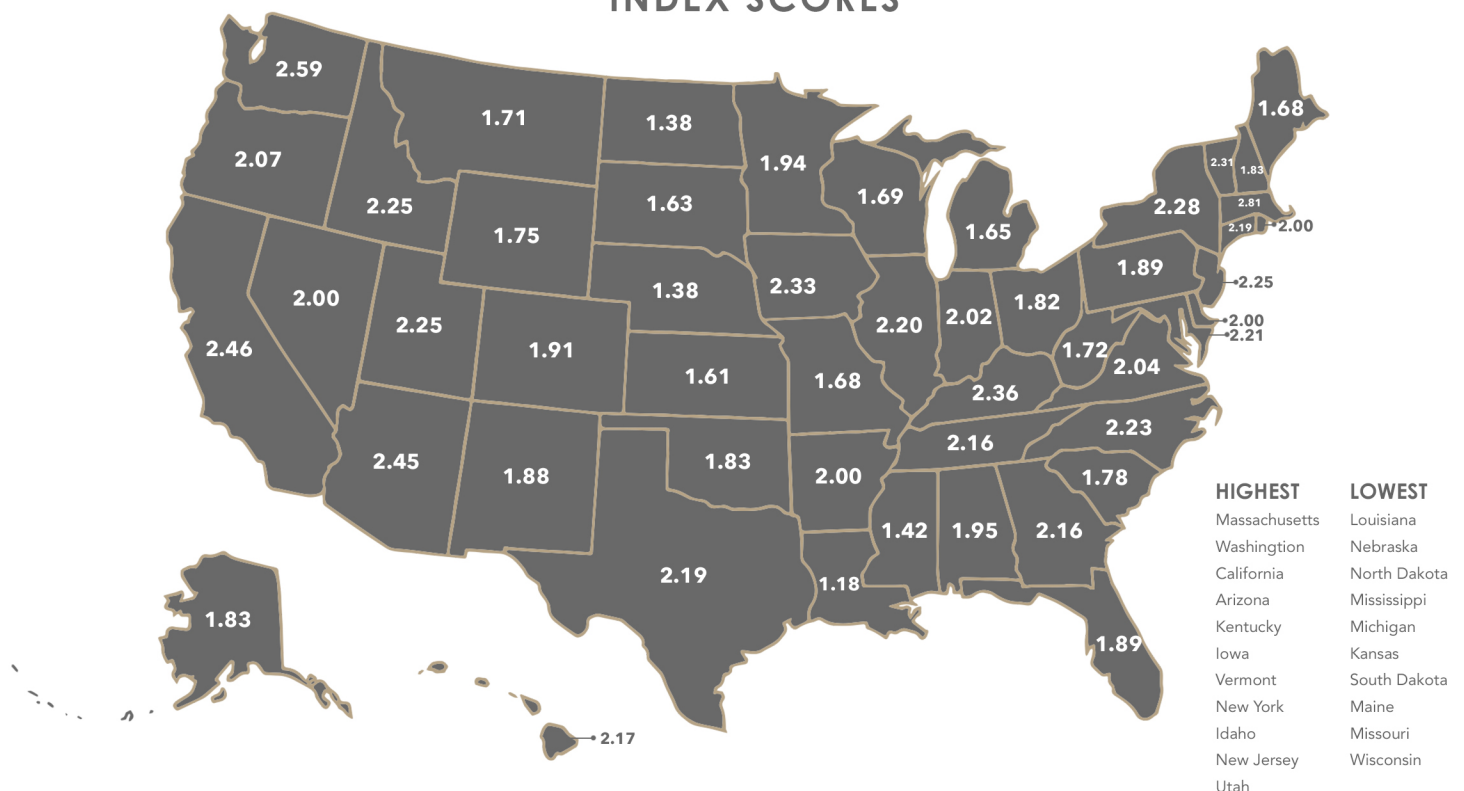
Preliminary findings of assessments of campus racial climate have guided the conversations and reflective examinations of the steering committee to produce a conference that is able to achieve excellence in fostering a racially inclusive environment in post-secondary education.

According to the [USC Race and Equity Center](#), public universities and colleges combined enroll more than 900,000 Black students. However, the comprehensive [report](#) documents that the status of these universities has exhibited to be more of a hindrance than support for their Black students.

EQUITY INDEX SCORES

Below are State Equity Index Score averages – the equivalent of a grade point average – across all campuses within each state. In the same fashion that colleges and universities customarily compute GPAs, four points equates to an A, three to a B, and so on. The average Equity Index Score across the 506 public institutions is 2.02. No campus earned above 3.50. Two hundred colleges and universities earned scores below 2.00.

MAP 1: STATEWIDE EQUITY INDEX SCORES



Read the full report: ["Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities"](#)

Additionally, the University of California's Office of the President conducted the largest university system **climate** study in 2014. The **results** indicated that Black students across each campus – and even more so for those who are Queer, Non-binary and Transgender – were not only underrepresented, they also experienced more discomfort than their non-Black peers with the campus climate. After the results, the UC system announced its **goal** would be to create a healthier environment, that will normalize the promotion of equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity. The aim of this goal would be to prompt these students to thrive from the point of admission to graduation.

BLACK QUEER AND NON-BINARY RESPONDENTS OF UC IRVINE'S 2014 CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

Respondents that faced multiple marginalizations were the most uncomfortable with the campus climate and diversity of UC Irvine. Of these respondents, those that Identified LGBTQ and Transgender or Genderqueer dealt with more discomfort in their departments, academic units, work, and clinical setting.

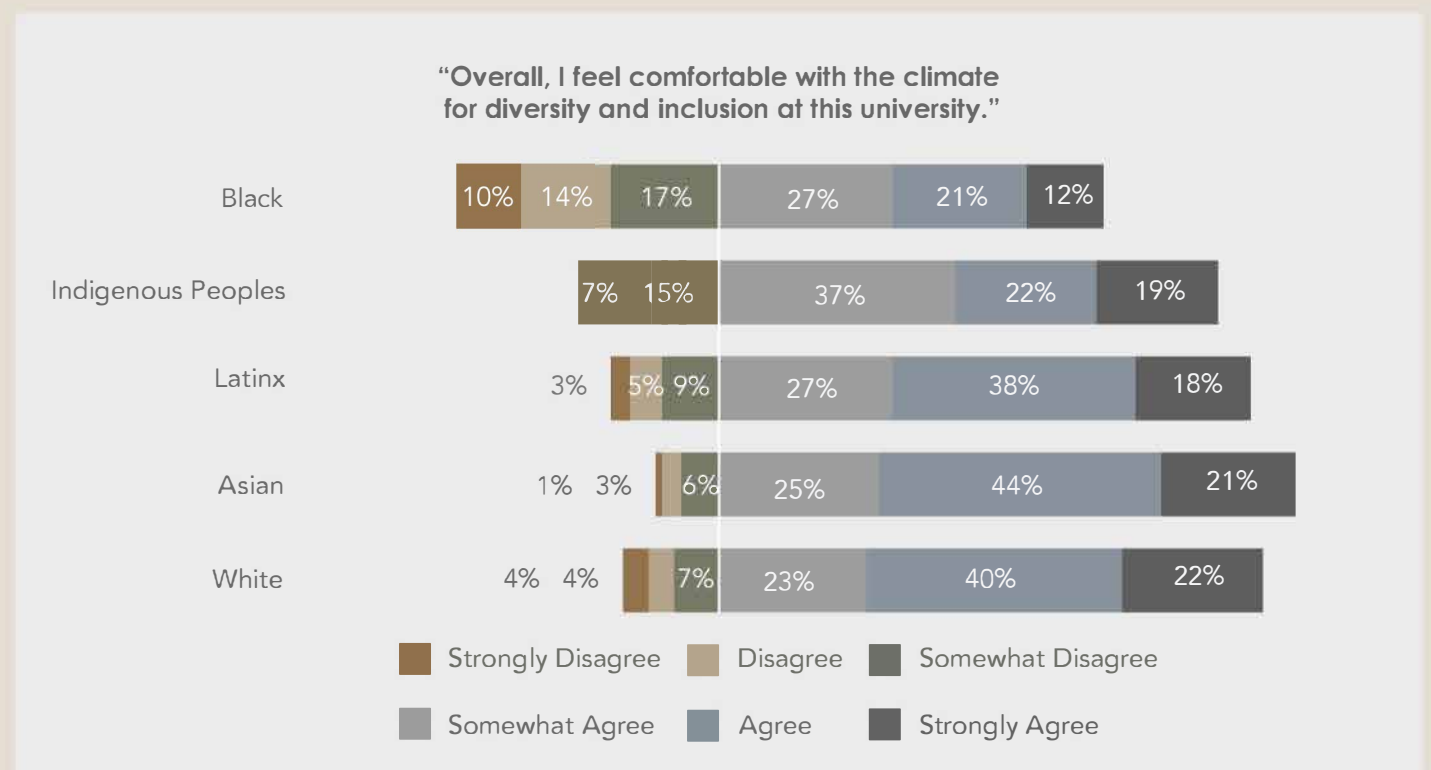
BLACK QUEER AND NON-BINARY RESPONDENTS OF UCLA'S 2014 CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

Respondents that face multiple marginalizations are underrepresented. From these respondents, those that identified as Femme, Genderqueer, and Transgender also reported they dealt with more discomfort than their white peers in the classroom setting.

Read the full report: ["UC System Campus Climate Project Final Report"](#).

While these post-secondary institutions promote and highlight how they strive for inclusion and practice a transformative pedagogy, their Black students continue to express they are systematically excluded. In 2018, The University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES), a systemwide biennial survey which solicits student opinions on a broad range of undergraduate students' academic and co-curricular experiences, indicated Black students at [UCLA](#) and [UC Irvine](#) continue to experience more discomfort than their non-Black peers.

FIGURE 1: STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CAMPUS CLIMATE OF UC IRVINE, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: SURVEY ADMINISTRATION YEAR 2018

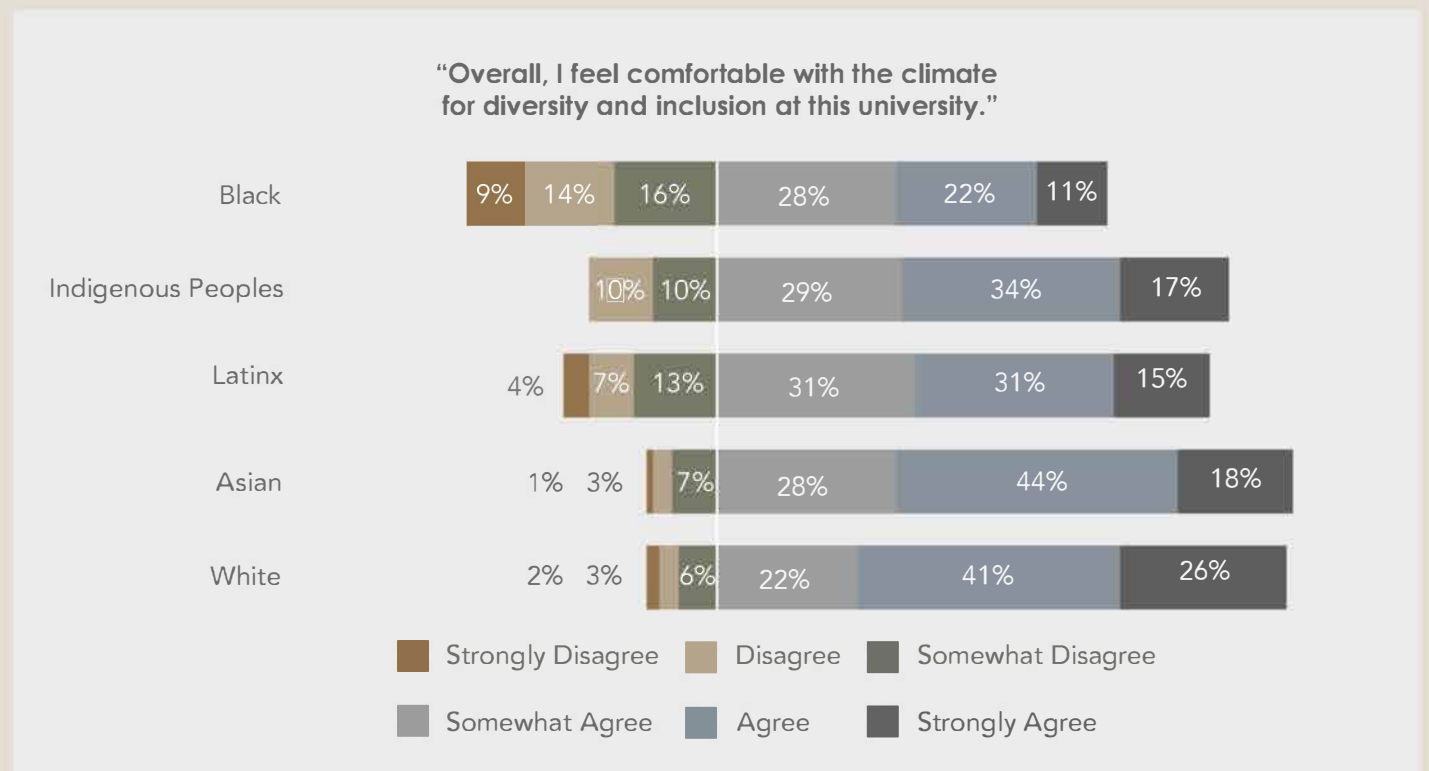


Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100 percent due to rounding. Definition of race/ethnicity: Identifies a student's race/ethnicity in one of five categories (i.e., Black, Indigenous Peoples in the U.S., Latinx, Asian, and White) based on UC's spring term enrollment data. Winter or fall term data is used if spring data is not available. Items with less than 10 valid responses to an item or a question will not be displayed.

SOURCE: University of California, University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey, 2018. Student Life and Development Section in the UC Module of the 2018 UCUES instrument. See *University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) Data Tables, 2018*, from <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/ucues-data-tables-201>.

Among students of different racial/ethnic groups attitudes towards UC Irvine's campus climate in 2018, Undergraduates who agreed that campus climate for diversity and inclusion was comfortable was highest for Asian students (90% percent), followed by White students (85% percent), Latinx students (81% percent), Indigenous students (78%), and Black students (60 percent). Undergraduates who disagreed that the campus climate was comfortable was highest for Black Students (41%), followed by Indigenous students (22%), Latinx students (17%), White Students (15%), and Asian students (10%).

FIGURE 2: STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CAMPUS CLIMATE OF UCLA, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: SURVEY ADMINISTRATION YEAR 2018



Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100 percent due to rounding. Definition of race/ethnicity: Identifies a student's race/ethnicity in one of five categories (i.e., Black, Indigenous Peoples in the U.S., Latinx, Asian, and White) based on UC's spring term enrollment data. Winter or fall term data is used if spring data is not available. Items with less than 10 valid responses to an item or a question will not be displayed.

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Among students of different racial/ethnic groups attitudes towards UCLA's campus climate in 2018, Undergraduates who agreed that campus climate for diversity and inclusion was comfortable was highest for Asian students (90 percent), followed by White students (89 percent), Latinx students (77 percent), Indigenous students (80 percent), and Black students (61 percent). Undergraduates who disagreed that the campus climate was comfortable was highest for Black Students (39 percent), followed by Latinx students (24 percent), Indigneous students (20 percent), White Students (11%), and Asian students (11%).

The following are examples and context of the most recent climate for Black students within the UC system.

At UC Irvine, in the past six years, Black undergraduate and graduate students, professional staff, and faculty have organized and protested the University's resistance to [institutional changes](#). They have demanded basic need services, such as Black psychologists, a Black resource center, general cultural competency education, departmentalization of the then-African American Studies Program and [divestment from policing institutions](#).



UC Irvine Black Student Union and Faculty, 2014

Similarly, since 2015, Black students at UCLA have [released](#) and continue to push for a set of [demands](#) in hopes of creating a more welcoming space on campus.

The persistent underrepresentation and lack of support in higher education for Black students stems from systems of power that have culturally normalized white supremacy, power, privilege, oppression and structural racism. In doing so, it has exacerbated the racial and socio-economic inequities that are present in society to perpetuate in higher education. Black students need to be given services and resources to thrive and succeed. Chronically undeserving Black students in academia not only hinders them directly, but it also results in a misguided effort to address the cycle of structural and systemic racism impacting the communities they come from.

There needs to be more precision and intentional inclusion in conversations about racial equity. Therefore, it is valuable that Black students and affiliated community members have an opportunity to explore ideas thoughts surrounding racial justice and coalition-building. The Black Visions Conference purposefully addresses the problems of accessing support services and curricular erasure for Black people. This multi-campus collaborative project has been designed to dedicate space where Black students, staff, faculty, community members and organizers to network across the United States to center those within the community who are pushed furthest at the margins and receive essential tools to navigate equity.

THE VISION

The Black Visions Conference has evolved for Black people to have the opportunity to share their histories and experiences from their point of view and have them be legitimized. These stories will be archived, catalogued, and curated thematically to amplify the voices of often overlooked communities in a service designed to celebrate, uplift, remember, and ethically narrate these Black lives. This is a promising and productive opportunity that is needed, especially for Black Queer, Non-binary, and Transgender students. It is a space for them to reenergize their pride and celebrate their visibility and existence.

This partnering conference will be held at the University of California, Irvine. The event will take place in the Spring on April 11th, 2020. Delegations from USC and UCLA have expressed support and will be present. This initiative intends to create a space that prioritizes Black people. It will be open to those who are interested in exploring thoughts and discussions as they relate to race, queer, transgender, and gender non-conforming identities, critical theory, media, and resilience. Respective campus delegations and community affiliates from across the country will meet with one another to create a network of support.

Previously, project organizers considered which of the three universities would host the inaugural event. Thinking ahead, it is likely this project will expand over time to include neighboring universities to participate. To centralize the conference in Southern California, UC Irvine seemed the most appropriate. While UC Irvine is spearheading the project, students, administrators, and faculty from UCLA and USC will participate and benefit from this event.

DISCLAIMER

It must be acknowledged that there is a history of explicit anti-Blackness within the city of Irvine. There have been multiple records of residents [harassing](#) Black students and making reports to law enforcement after seeing young Black people in surrounding [neighborhoods](#). Organizers are taking precautions by coordinating with the University's administration and training volunteers to appropriately guide and support attendees.

THE THEME

When thinking of what it means to “prioritize” Black people, one must consider the current state that Black people must survive against. Given the current national context – where white supremacy is [condoned daily and publicized by elected officials](#), and the [surge in racist](#), homophobic and transphobic hate crimes are the horrifying embodiment of anti-Blackness – it would mean to work towards creating spaces that produce Black Queer joy.

At the university level, this project will create an expectation for similar recurring projects. Where a new school of thought can imagine and produce spaces for Black Queer joy as a way of remaking experiences and future without having to wait for the institutions to catch up. To imagine and enact spaces of young Black Queer joy is not only radical but visionary.

This space will continue to recognize, expand upon, and celebrate the work of Black people who made a way out of no way and provided a path for the community to achieve all that it has been able to thus far. Black people like Marsha P. Johnson, who boldly claimed their lives as their own in times when they didn't even have the words to describe their experiences. Or like James Baldwin, they saw their power in glory in societies that constantly told them they were less than.

This project seeks to understand the way in which speaking from an essentialized position can be a site of political and historical experience. To gain further insight of what liberation would look like without the reliance on the state, industrial complexes, or assimilation.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The conference theme encapsulates a unitarian political identity of Black by holding a multiplicity of Blackness, and form alliances that can strategically address structural violence. It recognizes that power does operate differently across socialized identities. It is organized around what is the most immediate point of suffering, Black Queer, Transgender and Non-binary people. The space is collectively organized across an intersectional frame.

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Last year's keynote speaker, [Ericka Hart](#) embodies and actively implements the core goal of this event in her very own advocacy. She is an academic, a social activist, and a sex educator that presents critical points from a Black Queer lens. Hart's delivery of promotion of equity has built a large following via digital media and mainstream networks. Her keynote speech was interactive and constantly engaging with audience. Her customization created a useful and applicable discussion. As a keynote speaker, she left attendees with the historical framework, tools and motivation to thrive in academia and advocate for Black lives.

This year the steering committee is in search for a keynote speaker who uses their platform and voice to center empower those in the Black LGBTQ* community, and specifically advocate for Black transgender visibility. This speaker will be someone who is the living embodiment of our dreams finally coming true.



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Ericka Hart, 2016

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