



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 5/5/2020

New Mexico Black Lawyers Association Condemns Attacks Against Dr. Charles Becknell and Africana Studies

Albuquerque— Today — The New Mexico Black Lawyers Association stands in unity with Dr. Charles Becknell, Jr. and the Africana Studies program at the University of New Mexico. We strongly condemn the racist, hate-filled death threats against Dr. Charles Becknell, Jr., and his family. For 50 years, Africana Studies has been committed to racial equity and serving, and Dr. Becknell has dedicated his scholarship, teaching, and service to the advancement of the Black community in New Mexico. The threats of a hate-crime that has a long and disturbing history in the United States were made to invoke fear and disunity. Since the 1890s, anti-lynching advocate Ida B. Wells-Barnett showed how lynching was used as a means to terrorize and control Black people.

Incidents of anti-blackness have long been a constant feature of the Black experience at UNM. The archives of the Daily Lobo contain numerous stories. Each incident has necessarily interfered with teaching and learning within the University. It denies Black students an equal college education and deprives Black faculty of an equal opportunity to advance the education of their students and to pursue their research interests. As the late Raymond Hamilton would say “Doing good includes pushing back against the bad.” These incidents, this incident, are bad and NMBLA is pushing back.

Not only does NMBLA condemn the threats against Dr. Becknell, we support the investigation of the attacks by the University and state and federal law enforcement authorities. The perpetrators of these attacks may be subject to prosecution under state and federal hate crime statutes. Moreover, the perpetrators may be civilly liable for compensatory and punitive damages. The First Amendment does not protect death threats. If it should be found that the perpetrator is a member of the University community, we also ask that UNM take appropriate action for the violation of University policies.

We want to encourage Dr. Becknell not to grow weary in well-doing; be heartened to know that the Black legal community stands with you and for the advancement of Africana Studies.

<http://www.newmexicoblacklawyersassociation.org>