

March 10, 2021  
President's Office  
The University of Alabama  
Box 870100  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487

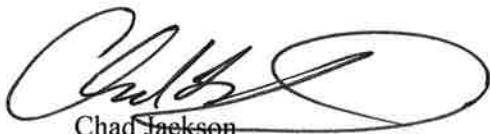
The University of Alabama is steeped in tradition. After all, it is the place where Legends Are Made. As an African American woman with over 20 years tenure at the University of Alabama (over 30 in the academy) and as a representative of the Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA), I ask, with the support of the BFSA, along with others, that those of you receiving this letter take the action needed to change the University of Alabama's fight song, "Yea Alabama." The song has undoubtedly served a celebratory function for supporters of sports at the University of Alabama. Nonetheless, the reference it contains to "Dixie" is offensive, demeaning, and painful to many persons of color connected with the University of Alabama. African Americans are a people of tradition, heritage, culture, and pride. Our presence here is significant and requires that we assist the University in identifying and correcting vestiges of the past that damage those here today. Despite recent perceived movement in this direction, the University has a long way to go in acknowledging the presence of persons of African descent and our immeasurable contributions to the very fabric and success of the University of Alabama. Through orchestrated and inadvertent policies, practices, procedures, and traditions, the place of Black Americans and their ancestors in the University of Alabama remains marginalized and inadequately acknowledged. Our commitment to the University of Alabama and its success compels us to commit in working with you to make you aware of actions that can be taken on multiple levels to correct this. Changing the fight song lyrics is one such action. Our request is that the term "Dixie" be removed from the fight song and be replaced with a more inclusive term.

"Yea Alabama!" was adopted as the University of Alabama's fight song in March, 1926 as the result of a university wide competition. The song's lyrics are based on the 1925 football season and the 1926 Rose Bowl, pointedly before persons of African descent were allowed to be here at any time as anyone, except as laborers, paid and unpaid and enslaved persons. Thus, we recognize that the use of the term "Dixie" in the fight song is reflective of those times and was not written to send a direct message to Black Americans today. But it does. And not a pleasant one. The term is one that glorifies and vividly reminds many of the general acceptance of Blacks as non-equal and subhuman with an expectation that they be submissive, which are characterizations that continue to challenge our equitable existence in today's society. There has been previous discussion of "Yea Alabama!" and the changing of this part of the fight song. It was suggested publicly at my University sponsored Last Lecture address in 2013. It is time that the University of Alabama's fight song lyrics are more respectful and inclusive of those who have and continue to contribute greatly to the growth and status of the institution.

I, along with members of the Black Faculty and Staff Association, formally request that the University of Alabama take the necessary steps to change the fight song lyrics by removing the word "Dixie". We offer up the suggestion of "Bama" but we would be more than willing to work with you on other non-offensive and non-oppressive language.

It was difficult to determine to whom this request should be made as there is no identifiable entity over the fight song. Thus, it was determined that it would be addressed to you, Dr. Bell, copying others to whom we thought this issue might be relevant as a point of information or action. If you have any questions, I along with representatives of BFSA would be happy to discuss them with you. Should you desire to discuss further, please feel free to contact me through email at [csimon@ua.edu](mailto:csimon@ua.edu). I, along with many of our Black faculty, staff students, and allies look forward to hearing from you.

Cassandra E. Simon, PhD, MSW  
Associate Professor



Chad Jackson  
Black Faculty and Staff Association President

CC: James Dalton, Executive VP and Provost  
Greg Byrne, VP Athletics  
Nick Saban, Head Football Coach  
Myron Pope, VP Academic Affairs

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Box 870398 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487 | 205-348-5355 | Fax 205-348-8505 | [bfsa.ua.edu](mailto:bfsa.ua.edu) | Email:  
[blackfsa@ua.edu](mailto:blackfsa@ua.edu)