

“If we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves and allow those responsible to salve their conscience by believing that they have our acceptance and concurrence. We should, therefore, protest openly everything... that smacks of discrimination or slander.” —Mary McLeod Bethune

Simply put, silence in the face of discrimination and racism is the same as agreement, and the silence of University of South Florida administration before and since the passing of HB/999 and SB266 is deafening. What is happening with Black faculty and staff at USF on all campuses goes beyond DEI and what is and isn't taught in classes. Administrators tout their dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion, while not openly condemning SB/266. They are allegedly working behind the scenes while remaining silent in the face of discriminatory legislation.

However, while some may be ambiguous about their support of Black people, not only at USF but also within all of the communities that house USF campuses, The Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA), The Black Employee Steering Committee (BESTIES), and the Committee on Black Affairs (COBA) want to make it abundantly clear that we condemn any and all discriminatory legislation as displayed in SB/266.

We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors who withstood unspeakable atrocities and wore chains so that we wouldn't have to. We stand on the shoulders of civil rights leaders who protested and fought for so many of the “freedoms” we have today. We stand with, beside, and behind any and all Black faculty, staff, and students.

We're being shown that too many are determined to strip away those freedoms by any and all means. Therefore, our message to any and everyone impacted by this legislation is simple:

We see you.

We hear you.

We feel you.

We support you.

We speak openly and boldly against any practices/laws/policies that directly affect our faculty, staff, and students because in the words of Assata Shakur, “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

