



The Graduate Student Senate (GSS) was outraged and saddened to learn about a recent incident in which presumed University of Tennessee students wore blackface in a photograph circulating on social media with a racist caption. We condemn this blatant act of racism and stand in solidarity with our students affected by this image. We understand that when events such as this happen, though it may be directed towards a specific group, it impacts us all.

The University of Tennessee is a place for educational, professional, and personal growth; a place where we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment for multicultural learning and a community of civility steeped in humility and respect. Regrettably, the most egregious acts on our campus are accelerants of hate, racism, and ignorance.

Students *deserve* the right to feel safe and welcome. Hateful acts do not represent the Volunteer Spirit and they have no place on this campus. Whether painted on the rock, posted on social media, or verbally across campus, we should remember why we are here - to learn and to build a community of individuals to live in our networks forever.

Our challenge is fostering and sustaining a culture that will maintain diversity, equity, and inclusion. We support our administration, faculty, and staff as they respond to and prevent such acts of hate. As students of this university, we share a collective responsibility to hold our fellow students accountable. We implore all students, faculty, and staff to boldly call out members of our campus community when their words or actions demonstrate hate or prejudice.

While these acts of hate appear to be recurring, we must not give up. We must continue to diligently improve the climate, one day at a time, for current students and for those to come. It is only after changing the broader social landscape of our university that we can expect this behavior to cease.

Let us work together to create a campus climate that makes no room or allowances for hate.