Chancellor Rodriguez and Honorable Trustees:

I write in support of the establishment of the Department of Ethnic and Race Studies at BMCC, which elevates the program to department status. I know that many among the BMCC faculty fought long and hard over the years in support of this program and are gratified that it is now achieving the same status as other departments and that its faculty will have the same rights and privileges as their colleagues.

At this moment of deep polarization and racism in this city and country, departments committed to teaching and disseminating information about difference and marginalized communities are vital. I urge you, therefore, to encourage other colleges where there are Africana or Latinx or Ethnic Studies programs to do the same – confer department status on them and establish such departments where there are none. I also urge that these departments receive some priority for hiring tenure-track lines. The expertise of these faculty in race theory must lead the way in developing anti-racist curricula and courses, but also expanding the knowledge of their colleagues about the rich history of people of color.

An urban university such as CUNY whose student body is predominately of color should and must serve as a model of transformative education. The Chancellor and Trustees should and must be advocates for this ideal.