Dearest Students:

We write this letter in the spirit of solidarity and love. And we begin this letter with one word: brokenness; one potentially problematic idea: “to be broken.” And then to ask, “what does it mean to break, to be broken?” Certainly, the events of this last week, this last month, this last semester have left many of us with broken hearts and a more general sense of brokenness: a broken justice system that facilitates impunity and the abuse of power, a broken society where the humanity of the racialized and the poor is subject to daily assaults and being disappeared, a broken world altogether where the cracks reveal far too many injustices. There is much that is broken. And we recognize that in this vulnerable moment things and persons nearest and dearest to us feel all the more fragile, easily broken, as we pause to also reflect on the histories and structures that render some lives, some bodies, more fragile, more easily broken, than others. It’s possible that many of you, as you read these (broken) words, are likely feeling that brokenness in your hearts. And that some of you are likely feeling that brokenness in your bodies and in your very spirits, the week’s/semester’s/year’s events leaving you feeling weary, broken-down, on the side of a shadowed road with your spirits deflated, while “hope,” that elusive winged thing, speeds by, sees you for a moment, but can’t be bothered to stop to help with the repairs. Many of you know this brokenness far too well, so well in fact that it’s beginning to feel like a broken-in shoe. And you are tired.

As feminist faculty, we write this letter to say that we know this brokenness too, and that we are living with that brokenness, albeit in ways both similar and different, alongside you. We write this letter in an effort to recognize and name that brokenness and to note that we are here, standing beside you amidst the fissures and the cracks that have been revealed. Without undermining or glossing over the very real pain that has resulted from so much breakage, we write this letter from a space of hope for what these heart-breaking moments of rupture might reveal and what lessons they might teach us about how we want to be and belong as a community here at Colgate and beyond. Breaking offers opportunity for building anew. After all, “[a] writer's heart, a poet's heart, an artist's heart, a musician's heart is always breaking,” says Alice Walker. “[I]t is through that broken window that we see the world.” As we look, cautiously perhaps, through these broken windows in our midst, what can we now see? What connections and opportunities for new relationships and alliance-building does such breaking reveal?

The events of this last week (and prior) have served to illuminate the inherent brokenness of a system—a broken system that facilitates students feeling uncared for, unseen, unsafe. We write this letter to let you all know that we recognize this brokenness and that we take seriously our responsibility to make sure those gaps in the system are addressed so as to trace the threats to their source(s). With all of that said, we thus hope that this letter will signal a different kind of break—the fracturing of a narrative that tells you that you are in this alone. You are not alone. This letter gestures towards the possibility inherent in what we recognize is a heart-breaking moment, but one that has also broken open the opportunity for us to share our stories of breaking and being-broken—stories that might bring us closer to
recognizing the deeper bonds and commitments we need to have to one another during these heart-soul-body breaking times, not only as a source of support for one another but as partners in the fight against injustice and oppression.

We are here, with you, and so are many unnamed others.

In solidarity,
Anna Ríos-Rojas
Meika Loe
Catherine Cardelus
Kezia Page
Constance Harsh
Cristina Serna
Claire Baldwin
Janel Benson
Jill Harsin
Hélène Julien
Marilyn Rugg
Susan Thomson
Nimanthi Rajasingham
Maura Tumulty
Deborah Knuth Klenck
Sarah Wider
Ulla Grapard
Dawn LaFrance
Kim Germain
Suzanne Spring
Mary Simonson
Lynn Staley
Lourdes Rojas-Paiewonsky
Mary Moran
Georgia Frank
Maureen Hays-Mitchell
Antonio Barrera
Navine Murshid
Danny Barreto
John Connor
Ken Valente
Elizabeth Marlowe
Lesleigh Cushing
Margaret Wehrer
Padma Kaimal
Susan Woolley
Nancy Ries
Ellen Percy Kraly