

## Bard College Students of Color Demands 2015

November 23, 2016

In light of recent events at Mizzou, Yale, and other schools across the country, students, administrators, and community members at Bard College came together on Wednesday, November 18th at 12:00PM at Ludlow Lawn to show support for and solidarity with Black students across the country who are fighting back against institutional racism and other forms of oppression.

Our Call to Action: “We, students at Bard College, recognize that in order for these institutional oppressions to end, everyone needs to get involved. There is no room for inaction. We ask that you leave your classes, your jobs, your meetings, to show that Bard is more than a place to think, that we are doing more than copying and pasting Facebook statuses, that we want to and need to actively dismantle systemic racism so that Black students can go to class without fear.”

We need to acknowledge that these problems are not only far away. Bard is complicit in systemic racism and, as members of this community, it is up to us to fight against it. In an effort to keep the conversations from the Black Out alive and ensure that each member of the Bard College community is accountable for the ongoing issues regarding race, diversity, and inclusion on campus we propose the following solutions:

1. Bard College **must** hire more people of color as faculty members, counselors, and administrative staff members. It is unacceptable that the vast majority of professors and staff members are white. People of color **must** be adequately represented on this campus, especially considering the rising population of black and brown students at this institution.
2. We recognize that part of the job of any university is to prepare students for life beyond the university. As such, it is an act of deliberate negligence that there is no explicit requirement to learn about any form of social justice or anti-racism at this college. Whether this takes the form of an academic requirement (such as a class) or an extracurricular requirement (such as training each semester), we demand that Bard College come together to ensure that faculty, staff, and students at all levels are able to engage with social justice and anti-racism productively without putting anyone in unsafe or compromising positions.
3. The “Rethinking Difference” requirement **must** be re-thought. The goals of this requirement **must** be made clear to students as it is unacceptable that students at this college fulfill the requirement without even knowing that they have fulfilled the requirement. In addition, students should be told how faculty decide which classes “rethink” difference and which classes do not.
  - a. What is being re-thought **must** be thoroughly examined. What qualifies as a Rethinking Difference class? Stricter guidelines and criteria for what counts

as a Rethinking Difference credit are needed. There is currently a lack of explicit intention in taking a class that is “rethinking difference.”

**Curriculums must make room for questioning.**

- b. FYSEM should allow students to question why the canon is what it is. It should give students the space to read authors that are not in the canon and talk about why they are not in the canon. The changing nature of our society and world must be reflected in the FYSEM curriculum in terms of diversifying the authors chosen for the class. It is unacceptable to introduce a black author only in the context of slavery; while such a text like Equiano is necessary, it must not be the only voice of color examined in the class. Intellectually training students and having diverse, thought-provoking curriculums are not mutually exclusive goals.**
4. Bard College **must** support and ensure the establishment and provision of Diversity and Sensitivity Workshops multiple times a semester to faculty and staff at all levels. These workshops will provide continuous in-person training regarding cultural understanding, engagement with bias, the use of inclusive language, etc.
5. The Multicultural Diversity Committee (MDC) at Bard College **must** be made more visible, transparent, and accessible to the Bard community regarding its roles and responsibilities on campus. Members of the Bard College community should be informed about the committee’s role in the diversity and inclusion hiring process as well as the committee’s weekly meetings and progress made by the MDC throughout the semester.
6. Bard **must** support the establishment of a student-run Diversity, Inclusion and Accountability Board:
  - a. This board would consist of no more than 10 students (2 seniors, 3 juniors, 2 sophomores, and 2 freshmen, and 1 graduate representative) and 1 Bard faculty or staff member serving as an advisor to the board. This board could either take the place of the Multicultural Diversity Committee of the Student Government, expand its role on campus, or serve as an entirely separate entity. The tasks of this board would be to:
    - i. Assist in the creation of required faculty and staff diversity training-- either in the form of workshops or incorporated into divisional faculty meetings. This **must** be put in place to ensure that all members of the Bard College community are held personally responsible for creating an inclusive and safe environment for all students. Furthermore, inclusiveness **must** not only be considered in terms of the physical classroom setting but also in the texts and discussions that students are engaging with in class. Some of the current discourses and practices regarding race in classes on campus have created unsafe environments where students of color are singled out, personally targeted, or invalidated during classroom discussions where race, ethnicity, and culture becomes part of the discussion. While this hostility may not be overtly recognized by the professor

teaching the class, the lasting impacts result in feelings of fear from the student when approaching the next class discussion.

- ii. Be in attendance at the faculty/staff trainings, meetings, or workshops in order to ensure that the issues of diversity and inclusion are properly discussed by the faculty and staff present.
  - iii. Participate in meetings regarding bias incidents involving faculty or staff. Each meeting will be used to discuss any incidents or reports that have arisen within the school and solutions to rectify the situation. This time will also be used to discuss any notable progress that has been made in the program. This time will also be used as a place to discuss bias incident reports filed and progress made. See example below:
    1. “Student in the John Doe’s ARTH section anonymously reported being singled out in class for speaking up against a certain topic. Issue was brought to the attention of the Diversity, Inclusion and Accountability Board in writing. There was a follow-up with the professor where it was determined to be a misunderstanding.” Cases may be anonymous if the Bard community member chooses to remain anonymous. In addition issues to be brought up could be a push in incorporate or remove a text, bring attention to certain language that was used in class by peers, etc.
    - b. Diversity, Inclusion and Accountability Board will be responsible for writing written outcomes for any substantial changes from departments which will be sent to the graduate and undergraduate student class.
7. Bard College **must** encourage dialogue between students and the local towns of Red Hook and Tivoli with their respective officials about race and diversity.
  8. A plan of action **must** be developed by the college, in tandem with students of color, to address racial equity in the coming years. Yearly benchmarks will be determined as a means of tracking the progress being made on this and related initiatives.
  9. The Office of President Leon Botstein **must** release a Statement of Accountability:
    - a. We ask that president Leon Botstein personally address the Bard Community in a written statement acknowledging the student testimonies and grievances voiced at the campus wide Black Out on Wednesday, November 18th as well as the ongoing systemic racism and microaggressions faced by students of color on a daily basis on campus. This statement should also address silence from the president’s office during the following events:
      - i. Threats against black students in Missouri, Yale, and other schools across the country. No statement was released expressing solidarity or support for students of color on Bard’s campus.
      - ii. Ongoing violence and disruption of education at Bard College’s campus in the the West Bank, Al-Quds. No statement was released

addressing the current state of the campus and the ongoing chaos Bard students at Al-Quds have been subjected to since September.

- iii. The incident at Bard College's campus in Simon's Rock regarding the Diversity Day Boycott and the ongoing complaints expressed by students from Simon's Rock on November 18th, 2015.

10. We demand that President Botstein, relevant members of the Senior Administration, and members of other relevant faculty-led Committees (such as the Diversity Committee) here at Bard College meet regularly with students of color to discuss short- and long-term solutions to attaining racial equity on campus.

\*These list of demands were drafted by a collection of Bard College students. Some these students were also organizers of the campus-wide Black Out on Wednesday, November 18th, 2015 and others are concerned students of color on campus. We understand that while a variety of students of color contributed to the creation of this document, these demands do not represent all students of color on Bard College's campus. This document is a work in progress and a small step towards change. Other students of color on campus are encouraged to add their own amendments at any time.