

The Miseducation: A Resource Guide for Students Looking to Hold Educational Institutions Accountable

For Us, By Us

To our Black students,

We see you, we hear your needs and hope this helps. Below we've managed to gather various resources provided by students and alumni fighting to hold their institutions accountable for perpetuating racism in their varying departments. In this guide, we're looking to uplift those currently in the fight and connect them to those looking for the way to start! This is not to say these are the only examples out there, the only people working or that these actions are what's best for every Black student and their specific institution. Maybe though, just maybe, this will help those feeling disconnected, discouraged, or unsure of where to start, a way in.

NOTE: If you, as a Black student, are not ready to participate in a conversation with your department, that is okay. It is the duty of your faculty and administration to honor your request to not participate and follow up personally when it feels appropriate. Everyone may not feel safe enough to dive into this difficult conversation. If an administrator is unwilling to participate, that is a problem that interferes with your safety. It is important to note and needs to be addressed immediately by your administration as to why their disinterest in engaging exists.

- The Broadway Advocacy Coalition

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1. WORDS OF WISDOM BY by Kiah McKirnan from Webster Conservatory '19
2. EXAMPLES OF ALUMNI - STUDENT ALLIANCE FORMATION EXAMPLES OF PETITIONS, CALLS TO ACTION, STUDENT & ALUMNI ALLIANCES, GRIEVANCES
3. ADVICE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR ADMINISTRATIONS
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5. CONTACT INFORMATION for additional SUPPORT/MEDIATION/TRAINING by black women leading the charge for educational justice and anti racism work within the educational landscape.

Words of Wisdom from Kiah McKirnan Webster Conservatory '19

INEVITABLE FACTS OF PUTTING A PETITION TOGETHER:

- You need to ask for help.
You must never ask for too little. Never.
- When you need people on your team, stop texting, ask, "Can I call you?" and pick up the phone and talk with them with honesty.
- You need multiple heads working on the petition, and you must always edit when appropriate.
- You need to respect anonymity.
- Remember your power.
- You must never downplay the severity of the situation.

INEVITABLE FACTS OF DEALING WITH MY ADMINISTRATION AT WEBSTER CONSERVATORY:

- You are not going to be asked into the spaces to speak directly to the people in charge, you are going to need a powerful white person (who is an ally and that you trust completely) to let you in to the meetings with admins & faculty--even if you head the efforts for change in the first place.
- You are going to feel like you need to shift your language so it is "digestible" for the people in charge. Especially if you're a black woman.
- You need to work across all power structures, and you need to flip the power structures upside down so they represent the true numbers: The entire network of alumni, the current students, the faculty members, the top three administrators.
- Find the administration & faculty members that are undoubtedly on your side.

INEVITABLE FACTS OF FORMING AN ALUMNI COUNCIL:

- You need to work across all age groups.
- You need to do healing work first. You must dedicate 3+ hours to listening and talking about your shared experiences of discrimination and thoughts on your institution before diving into any further work. Continue this as needed.
- You must invite the students into your meeting spaces, and ensure they can always have access to or attend your meetings for future reference.
- You need to respect that people have good and bad days, and job titles will shift.
- You need to realize gathering in a hierarchy is no longer an option, and you must work together horizontally.
- You need to accommodate all activists and learners. (the visionaries, the information gatherers, the orators, the visual learners)
- You need powerful white people on the council who verbally say they will relinquish their power, and will only use their power to further the cause.
- You need to have a continuous flow of information, (group chat) and you need to share information (catching up, updating on all incoming resources).

EXAMPLES OF PETITIONS, CALLS TO ACTION, STUDENT & ALUMNI ALLIANCES, GRIEVANCES

Webster Conservatory Petition

Courtesy of WebCo Alumni Advisory Council (spearheaded by Kiah McKirna, final draft prepared by Michael Tran)

A LETTER to the ADMINISTRATION and FACULTY of the CONSERVATORY of THEATRE ARTS at WEBSTER UNIVERSITY.

June 5th, 2020

We, the students **both past and present**, of this Conservatory write to you this letter today as a family with a singular voice to once again to call your attention to an issue that has been continually plaguing us as students of color: and that is the issue of diversity within the Conservatory.

In a time when we see institutions and theatres across the nation share their commitment to racial diversity across their social media platforms, we are reminded once again that to be an ally is not just a title nor a worded statement, but rather, conscious and committed actions requiring transparency, improvement, and constant growth.

We understand that the conversation of race is difficult. But nonetheless, it is an important topic to be discussed. We also understand that implementing actual changes can be difficult but want you to know that we are here to help. As artists, we are called to use our talents and skills as a way to promote empathy, begin dialogue, and motivate change within our communities on both a local and national scale. Therefore, we come to you today with a series of proposals and actionable steps in hopes that you will not only listen to us but take immediate action to ensure we are all heard.

Our first proposal pertains to transparency. We believe that the first step to instigate effective change and create a successful environment for growth in students, is that we as Webster Conservatory, must take steps to become a more transparent institution. It is our hope and want that Webster Conservatory will begin to be transparent in terms of the following:

- Transparent in the fact that there is learning, but that there is still a lot to learn.
- Transparent about the incredible list of successful Black and Brown alumni.
- Transparent that there is a severe lack of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students.
- Transparent that there is a need to strengthen relationships with the Black Repertory Theatre and other diverse, BIPOC institutions across the St. Louis area.
- Transparent that there is a severe lack of BIPOC faculty across Performance and DTSM.
- Transparent that there is an acknowledgement of the premature departure of BIPOC students.
- Transparent that there is a desire and need to retrain young black and brown storytellers.
- Transparent that there is a need to build funds for scholarships that assist BIPOC students in need.
- Transparent that there is a need for data and research to ensure that future classes will have 50%+ students of color.
- Transparent about solid courses of action that will lead to effective and sustainable change.

Our second proposal is intended to reorient the way we as Webster Conservatory approach the recruitment process. With this proposal, we hope to reach out to young emerging BIPOC artists across all racial and socio-economic barriers. As a Conservatory, if we are committed to finding and retaining the best talent, the barriers that prevent us from doing so must be eliminated.

- We believe that one of the top priorities for Webster University and the Conservatory is financial aid reform. This includes the need to build funds for scholarships to assist current, incoming, and prospective BIPOC students in need.
- We believe that Webster Conservatory must actively take steps to recruit BIPOC students. This begins by scouting for talent on a local and national scale while additionally providing them with

opportunities to get to know Webster University and the Conservatory of Theatre Arts through information sessions and/or personal invitations to lunches.

- There are numerous high school and state competitions for Shakespeare, Musical Theatre, and Acting. Additionally, the August Wilson Monologue Competition has state and national events annually, most winners are BIPOC and specifically black students.
- We believe that we must provide opportunities to young artists who are financial unable to invest in Unified auditions by beginning to accept video auditions / pre-screenings.
- We believe that recruitment must expand to more diverse and predominantly non-white schools across many different cities and states.
- We believe that Webster Conservatory needs to be more thoughtful about the way they promote materials and we believe it needs to showcase students well. Many students took issue with the 2018-2019 WebCo playbill cover. Out of all the beautiful pictures taken in Vera Stark, the one chosen for the cover was Kiah McKirnan dressed as a maid.
- We believe that Webster Conservatory must take steps to better alumni outreach, specifically to alumni of color. There have been so many successful black graduates from the Conservatory. Alumni like Cody Renard Richard, Rocky Carroll, Michael James Scott, Nathan Lee Graham, and Jenifer Lewis are just a few of the many extraordinary alumni of color to have graduated from this institution. Yet, very rarely do we see them come back to visit, talk to students, or support the Conservatory.

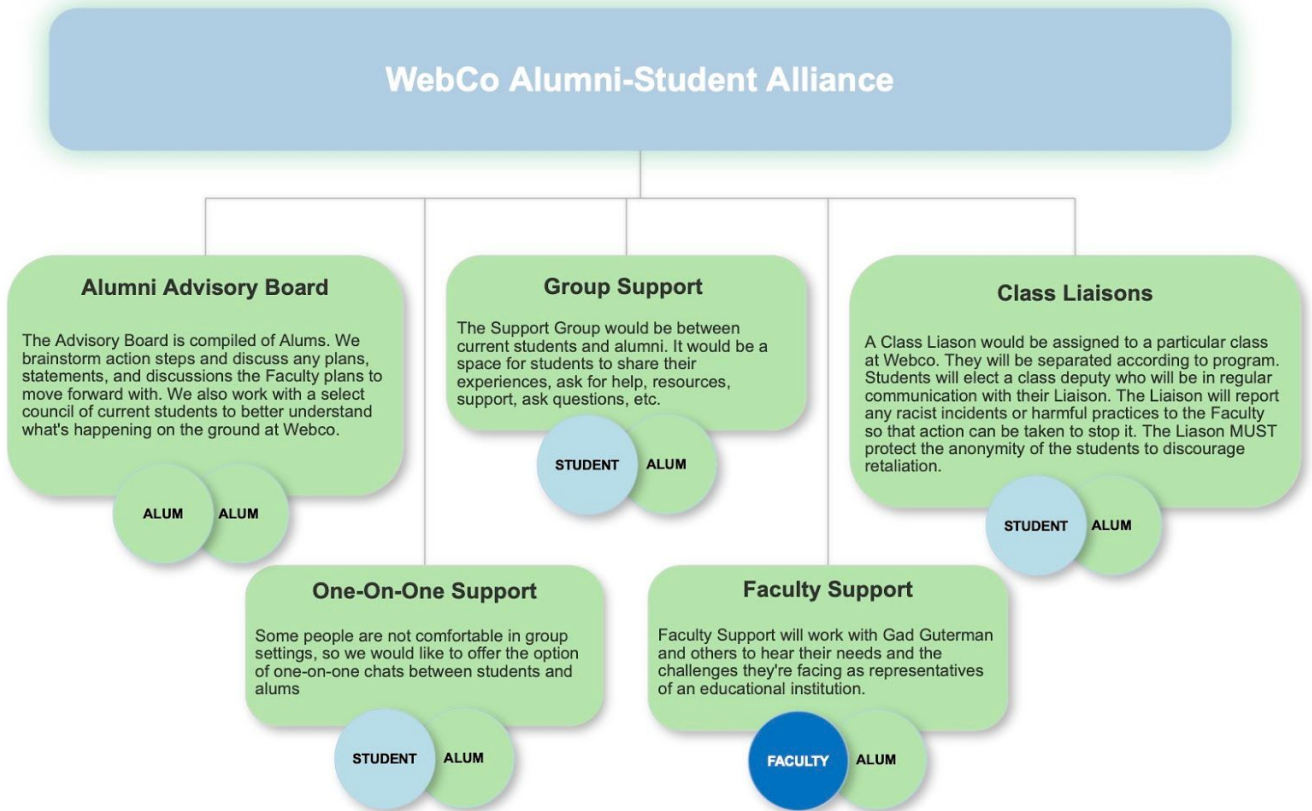
Our third proposal pertains to steps that we can take within the Conservatory. With this proposal, we hope to continually foster a learning environment that is inclusive, sensitive, and will prepare students for a career in the 21st century American Theatre.

- We must recognize the urgency at which BIPOC students are unable connect, understand, and express their issues and struggles openly due to the severe lack of BIPOC faculty members who understand those same issues and struggles.
 - We propose having alumni / performers of color speak to BIPOC students and talk about what their experiences are like in the current industry and how to best prepare.
- We must begin to implement courses that are specific to Black, Brown, and BIPOC theatre and performance in order to prepare them for success in their future careers.
- We must begin to be cognizant of the language used in classrooms, rehearsal spaces, audition rooms, and classroom. This involves using language that is inclusive and sensitive.
 - This is a link to an article written by Ashawnti Sakina Ford, an actress and teaching artist from Minneapolis, Minnesota of phrases that we should work to eliminate in our work environment: <https://minnesotaplaylist.com/magazine/article/2020/phrases-we-should-work-to-eliminate-in-the-rehearsal-room>
- Additionally, we must begin to hold conversations with all teaching staff to strengthen the way course material is discussed and taught.
- We must ensure that BIPOC students are strengthened through support and career guidance that pertains to industry as much as their fellow classmates.
- We must be cognizant in discussions / selection of Webster Conservatory seasons that it reflects the values of representation and diversity of stories.
- We must be active in reaching out to more diverse, BIPOC guest directors so that students will be able to work with a variety of different directors from different backgrounds as they will in the industry.
 - The link is a Google Drive of a growing list of BIPOC Theatre Artists / Technicians of Color: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/d/1nKAqLLZbURxxYbPIpLpL8Ase-6QIMpqS79ujz_B0xxE/htmlview#

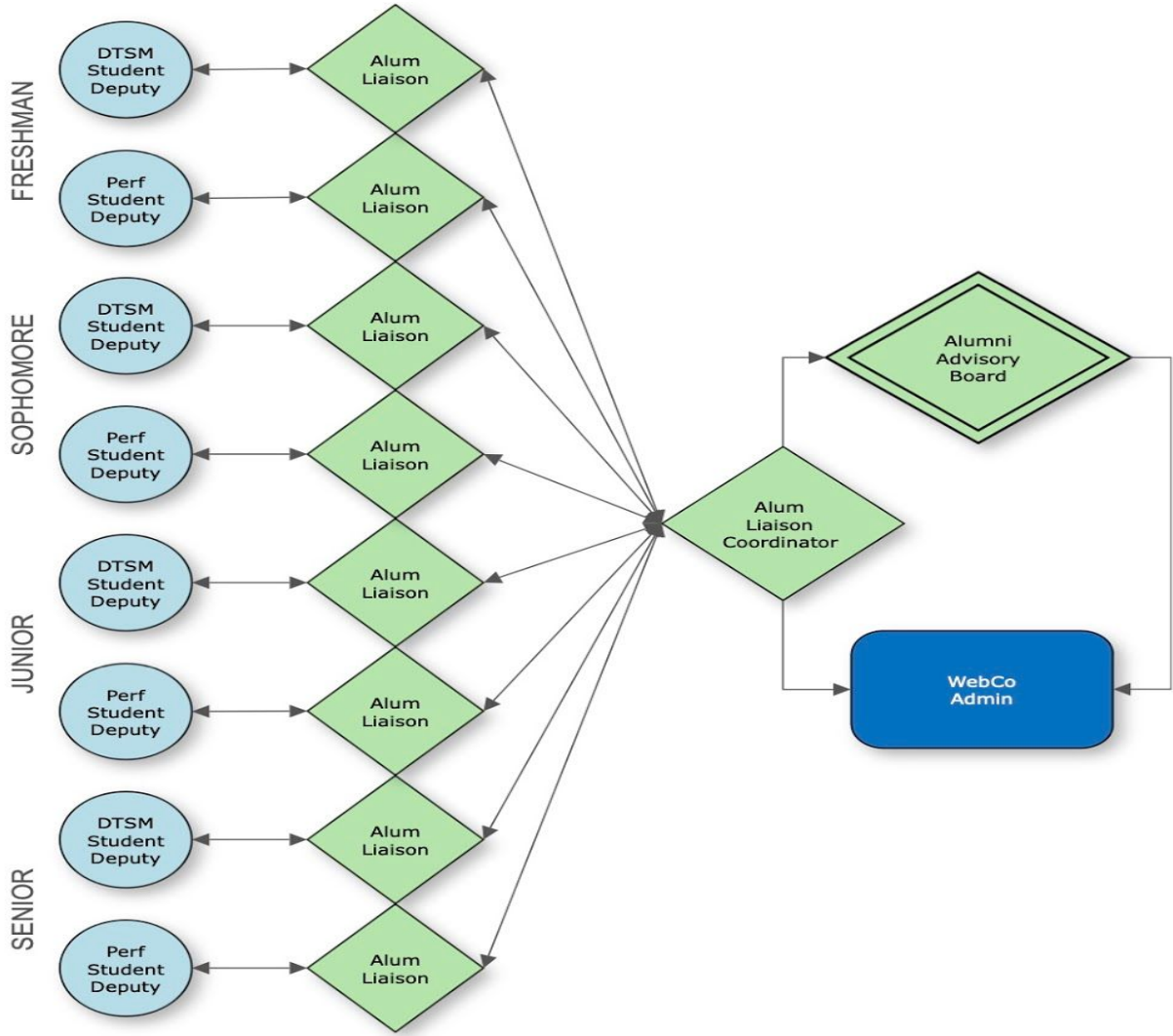
*signatures redacted for privacy and safety of students/alumni

Example of Alumni-Student Alliance Formation (WebCo Alumni Advisory Board)

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



Proposed Deputy Liaison Structure



WebCo Alumni Advisory Board

*This a zoomed in proposition of structure between current students, alumni and school administrations.
DTSM stands for Design, Tech, Stage Manager and Perf for Performance.*

A Call to Action Statement

Courtesy of Black Theatre Association at Virginia Commonwealth University

Faculty & Staff of TheatreVCU,

Your silence is deafening. As an official organization on VCU's campus, the Black Theatre Association asks that the VCU faculty acknowledge the atrocities the Black community continually faces. We stand behind Amari Cummings and the Black student body within this department. We insist that the department acknowledge the systematic racism that we, Black artists, encounter within our places of study, work, and society as a whole. As a department that profits off of the artistry of its Black students it should be your top priority to ensure that the Black students in this department are heard and protected. We hold you in high regards and therefore must hold you to high standards.

BTA is requesting the faculty's presence on June 12th, 2020 at 1:00 PM for a zoom meeting with students of TheatreVCU, discussing our demands, other shortcomings of our department, and actions that may be taken to improve them.

We call for the department to take initiative on these demands:

1. All mainstage productions, regardless of demographic background, should receive the same number of performances as our white counterparts .
2. A show with a mostly Black or all Black cast should have access to the same resources (advertising, promotion, & marketing) as predominantly white or all white shows.
3. Faculty, (especially White) should be properly trained in pointing out and subduing incidents of microaggressions, implicit racial bias, and stereotypical racism within a classroom setting
4. White faculty who facilitate acting and performance courses should refrain from encouraging Black students to turn to stereotypical caricatures in performance spaces that may be inaccurate and/or exaggerated. While also refraining from using terminology such as "hood, sista, thug, urban, cultured, brotha, and etc."
5. Require that the President & Vice President of the Black Theatre Association are seen as official VCU Theatre student representatives.

"I don't know what most white people in this country feel, but I can only include what they feel from the state of their institutions." - James Baldwin

Best Regards,

Black Theatre Association

President: Trinitee Pearson
Vice-President: Khadijah Franks



Call to Action Statement

Courtesy of Naire Poole, Bonita Jackson, Nydira Adams, Ptah Garvin, and Daniel Ajak MFA Cohort of
FSU/Asolo Conservatory

A Call to Action

FSU/Asolo Conservatory, Florida State University, & Asolo Repertory Theatre

June 12th, 2020

Dear Greg Leaming, Michael Donald Edwards, Linda DiGabriele, and Celine Rosenthal,

Attn: John Thrasher, James Frazier, Bradley Brock, and Ann Charters

The FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and Asolo Repertory Theatre recently released statements on social media in response to the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. In both statements, each institution claimed to stand in solidarity against racism. We, the current Black students of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory, write to you today to state with one voice: these claims are false.

You claim to stand in solidarity against racism, so we investigated your claims. Here is what we found. Since the 1999-2000 season, the FSU/Asolo Conservatory has produced 91 plays in its production seasons. None of them were written by Black playwrights. That is zero plays by Black playwrights over 21 years. Over that same span of time, the Conservatory has employed only one Black director. We surveyed the syllabi, and from 2017 to the present day, the entire curriculum of our program—including movement, voice, acting, and text analysis—has included only two Black authors, August Wilson and Suzan-Lori Parks. Parks was just added to the curriculum last year. Wilson and Parks are two out of twenty-one readings on the syllabus for text analysis. The other nineteen are all written by white men. We also analyzed student demographics. From the graduating class of 1999 to the graduating class of 2020, the percentage of Black students who have graduated from the Conservatory is 6%. And our investigation has led us to believe that since the inception of the Conservatory in 1974, there has been only one Black faculty member who was employed for two years over a decade ago.

The Asolo Repertory Theatre produced 187 shows from the 1999-2000 season to the 2019-2020 season. Out of those 187 shows, four were written by Black playwrights. And two of those four were by the same playwright. Over the last 21 years, Black playwrights have accounted for just 2% of the shows produced at the Rep. Also over the last 21 years, the Rep has only employed three Black directors. 187 shows. Three Black playwrights. Three Black directors. Finally, the leadership of the Rep since its inception in 1958—including executive directors, managing directors, and artistic directors—has been exclusively white. If you care to see the evidence for any of our data, we have the receipts.

To stand against racism is, at minimum, to center and uplift the voices of Black people and people of color. Your claims that you stand in solidarity against racism are not only false, they are offensive. These numbers alone demonstrate a consistent and blatant disregard of Black artists by your institutions. You are not standing against racism—your institutions exemplify the very definition of institutional racism. You cannot claim that racism has no place in your institutions when you systematically refuse to represent Black voices. Your statements even fell short of saying Black Lives Matter. Now we know why.

We reached out to and received feedback from all the Black alumni of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory since 1996 regarding their experiences while students at the Conservatory. Here is what we found. When asked whether they felt the faculty were operating in their interests as Black students, the large majority of Black alumni either said no or that this is an area of concern. For several Black students,

A Call to Action
FSU/Asolo Conservatory, Florida State University, & Asolo Repertory Theatre
June 12th, 2020

completing the program also meant surviving the program—finding ways to navigate within the walls of the Asolo while contending with widespread microaggressions, racial biases, and discrimination from the Conservatory and the Rep. We learned that the leader of the Repertory Theatre once paraded a group of five Black students in front of community members at a catered event held on the mezzanine of the theater lobby and exclaimed, “Look! There’s five of them,” without introducing each student by name, as a way to celebrate the Rep’s supposed racial progress. In doing so, he diminished the individuality of the five Black students by placing them on display. We also learned that the leader of our Conservatory, who has never chosen to produce a play by a Black playwright in the Conservatory season over his fifteen-year tenure, once singled out two Black students in front of all their white classmates just before their showcase in NYC and said they, “look like shit,” because of what they were wearing.

Alumni have expressed that when issues were raised concerning lack of representation, those issues were often dismissed or left unresolved, leaving several Black students to feel silenced, powerless, and without a safe place to voice concerns. Many Black alumni stated that faculty and staff are ignorant concerning the complexity of race in our society, preventing the faculty from knowing how to support and empower Black students and their artistic growth. We commiserate with the Black alumni in their experiences—from being “mistakenly” called the name of another Black student by faculty, Rep staff, and sponsors, to being pressured to have a relationship with the white sponsors who pay for us to be here and who wear buttons with our faces on them as they proudly exclaim we are theirs, to being subjected to inappropriate and derogatory comments made by faculty and sponsors about Black students’ culture, speech, and bodies.

As current Black students of the Conservatory, we feel and hear our Black predecessors. Black students have pushed through. Pushed through being triggered, silenced, threatened, exploited, invalidated, dismissed, isolated, restricted, othered, belittled, controlled, and underrepresented. And this is traumatic. The necessity for Black students and students of color to push through the oppressive web of institutionalized racism ends now.

The only remedy to the problems outlined in this letter is comprehensive systemic change. Not just for the next few years, but for the duration of the existence of your institutions. Below is a list of suggestions as to how you can go about changing the structure of your institutions from being racist to being anti-racist. We are intentionally providing suggestions instead of demands because we want to give you the opportunity to live up to your statements. But we **will** hold you accountable. So, what changes will you make? We await your reply.

In power and solidarity,

The current Black students and Black alumni of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training,
and our Allies

A Call to Action
FSU/Asolo Conservatory, Florida State University, & Asolo Repertory Theatre
June 12th, 2020

List of suggestions for an anti-racist plan of action:

1. Admit your complicity in institutional racism and commit to being anti-racist.
2. Require every staff member to undergo regular anti-racist trainings and include required readings such as *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, and *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo.
3. Actively recruit and admit Black students and students of color.
4. Hire people of color. Hire BIPOC faculty members, administrators, guest lecturers, guest artists, directors, music directors, choreographers, actors, stage managers, lighting designers, sound designers, set designers, costume designers. Commit to diversity in employment at every level of your institutions.
5. Hire people in leadership positions who have track records of being committed to uplifting Black voices and voices of people of color. If current leadership does not represent these values, review the current leadership.
6. Include BIPOC voices in the curriculum. Assure that we are fully represented in mandatory readings on the syllabi. You can find examples of ways forward here:
<https://howround.com/beyond-decolonizing-syllabus>
7. Commit to regularly producing shows by Black playwrights. Commit to regularly producing shows by playwrights of color.
8. Commit to imaginative, color-conscious casting. Do not restrict the students of color from playing or understudying various, diverse roles.
9. Restructure the student-sponsor relationship so students have no obligation to interact with the program's sponsors. Explicitly create an environment where students feel no pressure to attend or be put on display at brunches, galas, or other events. Students should be free to pursue their education and hone their craft without bearing the burden of assisting your institutions in the retention of your exclusively white sponsorship. Recruit and add Black sponsors and sponsors of color to the sponsorship program.
10. Hire a multicultural/diversity liaison that any student can go to if they feel discriminated against and confide in that person without facing retribution.
11. Donate to organizations fighting against racism. Here are a few good options to put your money where your statements are:
Black Lives Matter: https://secure.actblue.com/donate/ms_blm_homepage_2019
Black Lives Matter Sarasota-Manatee Chapter: <https://venmo.com/BLM-Manasota>
Equal Justice Initiative: <https://support.cji.org/give/153413/#!/donation/checkout>
Black Trans Travel Fund: <https://www.blacktranstravelfund.com/donate>
The Okra Project: <https://www.theokraproject.com>
12. Read this letter addressed to White American Theater: <https://www.weseeyouwat.com>

*signatures redacted for privacy and safety of students/alumni

BoCO at Berklee School of Music Social Media Call Out Posts & Ally Email Template

- “Boston Conservatory at Berklee,
Your website reads that you were one of the first conservatories to grant admission to African Americans. I beg you live up to your legacy. You’ve forgotten your roots.
Where are the words?
Black Lives Matter.
This is a nice statement but it is the same generality I have always experienced from you. I implore you to read the recent words of Christian Denzel Bufford, Darrell Morris Jr. and David Andre. What is your plan to weed out the institutional racism in YOUR institution?
I love the Boston Conservatory. I visit often. I claim it. But if you won’t claim me, what is there to do?
All institutions have their problems but you are MY institution. So I challenge you, with the utmost love, to truly acknowledge your shortcomings and make a change. It can start with saying the words Black Lives Matter. That is the truth of this moment.”
- “Boston Conservatory at Berklee Do you support #blacklivesmatter? I paid tuition for four years. I’ve donated on your giving days. Your name is in my bio. I was your 2017 Carmen Griggs Student Leader. Do you stand behind the value of my life and the lives of the all the black students who have navigated the halls of your predominately white institution and overwhelmingly white musical theater program? We see your silence but we need you as an ally. I’ve seen the post from the Berklee President, but I’d love a word from BoCo.
UPDATE:
A statement has been made by Cathy Young. I have responded in another status if you care to check that out. It is not enough for me”
- “No one is asking nicely anymore. We can’t move forward until the very real problems are truly acknowledged. I want future BoCo students to get all the things I loved from the school and NONE of the rest of it. We said we will hold you accountable. This is holding you accountable. We won’t stop watching.”

**Posts from Niani Feelings, alumni of BoCo. BAC also recognizes these words in addition to the words of Christian Denzel Bufford, Darrell Morris Jr. and David Andre and many more that have called this institution to action. We recognize the creation of an ally email template by Katie O’Halloran. We recognize the petition by Derek Hoyden, acknowledged in the Boston Globe article listed below, called this institution to action. And additionally, we recognize the letter of actionable and quantifiable plans for Berklee created by the Black Student Union, Students of Carribean Ancestry and the Berklee Black Graduation Committee that can be found on Instagram @berkleebus*

To [name of your educational institution],

We, allies to our black classmates and friends, implore you to make a statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement immediately. Your silence speaks volumes, and we urge you to join us as we stand in solidarity with our black community.

Your black students and alumni need your support. When a black [name of your educational institution] alum includes your name in the playbill of a national tour, Broadway, or regional production, they are willingly tethering their names to yours. Will you show them the same support now? Will you give them a reason to call themselves “proud alum” of [name of your educational institution]?

Photos of black students are often used in your marketing campaigns and on your website. Tokenizing these students for the sake of marketing your institution is always unacceptable, but it is even more despicable when you refuse to take a stand for the lives of the very students you claim to value so highly.

We are asking you for a statement that includes the following:

1. Use of the words “Black Lives Matter”
2. Acknowledgement of your shortcomings
3. An outlined plan to work towards weeding out the institutional racism at [name of your educational institution]

Your website claims: [insert relevant quote pulled from your educational institution’s mission statement, ie anything about valuing ALL students, teaching students to contribute positively to the world at large, etc.]. Your silence makes it difficult for black students and their allies to see how you are putting these words into action. If, as you claim, the contributions of all students are essential, surely you would agree that the lives— the very existence— of your black students are essential as well. In short, Black Lives Matter.

We spent four years learning and growing inside your walls. We have been taught to be bold artists who challenge the injustices we see around us. Now, we are challenging you.

Make a change. Speak up. Embody the values with which you claim to operate. We challenge you now because we want [name of your educational institution] to be a family that values all of its members— *that* is an institution we can be proud of.

With all the grit you taught us,

Allies to our Black Community at [name of your educational institution]

We Move Advocacy List of Grievances

We Move is an advocacy initiative founded by Black alumni of The American Musical & Dramatic Academy. After conducting a questionnaire and virtual forums comprised of current Black AMDA students & alumni, We Move has formulated a list of action plans to remedy each specific grievance that was presented. We intend to liaise with AMDA in order for our solutions to implement necessary change within the institution. A selection of grievances experienced at AMDA by current Black students and alumni:

- When the "N" word appears in a script that is being studied, students have objected to their white instructors vocalizing the word within the classroom setting. This word is unacceptable for any non-Black person to use regardless of intention. Although this word may be part of the educational material, there needs to be protocol put in place concerning its usage for the purpose of storytelling and education. These incidents have been reported to the administration by multiple students. However, this has proved to be ineffective and students continue to experience gaslighting about their valid discomfort from said instructors.
- Unwanted, ill-informed, and intimidating commentary from white instructors have been directed towards Black students regarding the appearance of their hairstyles. Black students have often been publicly berated in the middle of a class in session for wearing styles of cultural significance.
- Instances of microaggressions specifically affecting Black students. These incidents involve colorism, instructors' disdain for frequency of changing hairstyles as a proper method of Black hair care maintenance, pointed use of AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) by instructors when being addressed, etc.
- The microaggressions towards Black students have been affecting their mental health. There needs to be concrete knowledge about intersectionality and Black trauma in order to address their mental health needs.
- Students feel as though retaliation against them is very likely if they were to make a complaint against an instructor. This feeling is due to there being no anonymity. A fear of retaliation rooted in implicit biases against a Black student causes many of them not to come forward with their concerns.
- The second semester curriculum for students in the Integrated and Studio programs both require focus on material from the pre-1950s. This curriculum is being implemented with barely any sensitivity to the very real and upsetting lack of equal rights, protection, and autonomy for Black artists during that time period. Students are expected to take on this material for an entire semester without any regard for the mental space they must enter for the sake of context in combination with the modern systemic racism they still have to face daily.
- Students are presented limited opportunities due to the type casting system used within the institution. Due to systemic racism and the white gaze, it must be realized that this type casting is rooted in implicit biases based on the perspectives of an overwhelmingly white faculty.
- There is a student desire for guidance on post graduation life for Black actors as it will relate to the inevitable discrimination they expect to face in the performing arts industry.
- and the list continues...

<https://wemove.carrd.co/>

*posted courtesy of We Move's Founding Director Abena Mensah-Bonsu and Miguel Flores, AMDA alumni

ADVICE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR ADMINISTRATIONS

BLACK STUDENT LED COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Before you all share your experiences, community agreements should be made by Black students in your departments to set expectations of listening and honoring the work. If there's only a few of you, if you are the only one, it is absolutely fine to request the department bring in a trained Black mediator or if you have co-conspirators that you trust, to build the agreements there. The point is: the administration cannot set the terms of your discussion. This is FOR YOU, your space. As an educational institution, there's an opportunity for them to move away from inherently racist power dynamics and instead prioritize your voices as Black students'. Identify needs of your community and expectations for a safe and honest discussion.

Creating agreements as a community helps to set boundaries that give the full group something to refer to when they're disregarded & overstepped. If in a virtual space, they can be written in the chat box. Those closest to the problem must be closest to the solution; Black students, you deserve to be at the center of the conversation and be key contributors to organizing the flow, agenda, guidelines, and expectations.

NOTE: Beware of guidelines that privilege the privileged, and silence the silenced.

For example: "Be Nice." Because conversations about race can be very uncomfortable for some white folks, any suggestion of racism is often perceived as rude or as an attack. Though the intention of a "BE NICE" is understandable, within difficult conversations this can be an insidious guideline, keeping white folks unchallenged and comfortable. "BE NICE" can also be utilized as a way to monitor and control the valid emotions and expressions of marginalized individuals, also known as tone policing.

Examples: Be emotionally present; take care of yourself. Step out if you need to. To our institutions: confidentiality- keep what's shared within the room.

LOGISTICS TO CENTER BLACK STUDENTS EXPERIENCES, QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS

Race is a vast topic, you are dealing with it in every facet of their life right now. Give them the floor to name what they observed in the forum, what resonated personally and why, what they've experienced/are experiencing in their departments that mirror the experiences voiced in the forum.

- Allow the discussion to flow organically.
- Do not let them speak over, invalidate, discredit any experience you share.
- If you have a thought that is not directly on topic, create a "Parking Lot" of thoughts to revisit at another point in conversation or schedule another discussion to work through these parking lot questions/thoughts.
- Make space after sharing experiences for Black students to offer suggestions or needs that haven't been heard/met.

Begin to identify:

- Is the curriculum disproportionately built to harm BIPOC?
- Are BIPOC students authentically represented in the material you study/perform/create?
- Has there been a space in the department to talk about racial issues within the industry, or the department itself?
- How can your department create a space if there has not been one before? What does it look like?
- Is there a need for an Advisory Board or Accountability Committee?
- Are there Alumni willing to collaborate in advisory positions to protect current students? How do you connect with them?
- This is a space to hear student demands, needs and expectations for an equitable educational landscape, you deserve to be involved in the decision making process.

NOTE: These spaces for discussion should be safe venues for Black students (& Black faculty) to speak freely, transparently, and authentically without fear of retaliation and the willingness to share their experience is both a gift and personal sacrifice. Let's hold them to that expectation of grace and understanding. You have every right to be frustrated and fed up.

SCHEDULE ONGOING GATHERINGS

Have your institutions commit to meeting on a regular basis. Once a month? Twice a month? Every Sunday? Throughout the school year.

In other words, keep this going, remain accountable and committed to change. Below listed are necessary resources that can aid active restructuring.

- Remember it is hard for Black students, any marginalized students, to not be overpowered by their administration when there's only a handful. To balance the already tilted scale of power, it is vital your institution is willing to invest in paying for a facilitator to join these spaces.
- Remember to keep the Black students should be centered and part of this entire process.
- Remember that racist structures tend to "fix" the problem in silos and alienate those directly affected.
- Remember you all, as students, must be allowed to lead these conversations, those with power to make changes should remain amenable and flexible.

We've told your institutions that they really should hire a professional to handle this work to protect you all. Yes, we are asking that they invest their funds and reallocate the necessary resources to support you. Black students aren't on campus to do free social justice work so don't let them make you. Here are some people you can urge your department to bring in.

Folks to Consider Having Your Department Hire:

1. **Rebecca Kelly G-** arts and equity consultant, facilitator, interdisciplinary artist, and former civil rights attorney working with communities to heal internalized oppression, decolonize the imagination, engage restorative justice, and move practices toward equity. Additionally, BIPOC Actor's Advocate. <https://www.rebeccakellyg.com/>
2. **Milta Vega-Cardona-** an organizer and core trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, providing Undoing Racism workshops and technical assistance in antiracist organizing, leadership development, and transformational change. <https://movementresearch.org/people/milta-vega-cardona>
3. **Vickie Washington-** a theatre maker, cultural worker, teacher, social justice advocate-activist-organizer; moving through the world as an African-centered, anti-racist Black Woman. Prepared to train and empower educators to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in our schools and communities. <https://centerracialjustice.org/trainers/vickie-washington-2/>
4. **Dr. Tawyna Pettiford-Wates-** educator/organizer of engagements and workshops geared toward businesses, organizations, schools and communities to help in the process of eliminating racial and cultural stereotypes and the movement toward a more just and equal world. <https://www.theconciliationproject.org/>

MAKE A TRANSPARENT ACTION PLAN

Make sure your department commits to laying out the steps they'll be taking individually and as an institution to deal with inequities transparently. They need to ensure that you, as the directly impacted students, remain a part of the conversations and decisions being made. (i.e. redrafting the code of conduct, editing the student handbook, revising

the curriculum department wide, including students is choosing the mainstage seasons, hiring an arts and equity consultant, hiring BIPOC faculty, developing recourse for inequitable treatment on campus)

Not all of this will be covered in one Zoom meeting, or two. Plan to keep your department accountable, drink water, rest when you need, remind yourself of what anchors you to this work, and keep stoking the flames of this mighty, mighty fire... the wins will keep coming.

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BAC thanks and honors those willing to contribute their work to this guide. We know they're not the only ones in this fight, it is our hope that they may be guiding or centering examples to add, begin, or keep your fight going.