

Official Call to Action

From the Student Senates of the
College of Saint Benedict & Saint John's University



Saint John's Senate

A Message from the Saint Ben's and Saint John's Senate

On Monday, June 8th, the Saint Ben's and Saint John's Senates hosted a campus wide Zoom event to address the horrific murders of multiple Black individuals across the United States at the hands of the police. In somber recognition that this narrative was not new, but rather a recurring theme exemplifying hundred years of racial oppression, bias, and discrimination, we sought to examine our very own community. While we often consider our two institutions to be wonderful places, racism does exist here at CSBSJU. Our intention with this Zoom event was to provide students and faculty alike with a space to listen to the experiences of Black and marginalized students. As Senators, as faculty members, and as students, we were heartbroken to hear of these experiences by members of our very own community. The pain and hurt that these individuals have felt is something which many of us will never know. Nevertheless, we are strengthened in our resolve to fight for these students, to ensure that their voices are heard, and to guarantee that change is set in motion.

On Wednesday, June 10th, the Saint Ben's and Saint John's Senates reconvened with students and faculty, but with a different purpose. This session served as one of action where we could brainstorm ideas, generate solutions, and identify specific issues in our campus communities. Once again, students and faculty came ready to engage in dialogue and active brainstorming, and the conversation was largely productive. In this session, we identified seven different aspects of the CSBSJU community that we felt needed work: CSBSJU as a whole, students, professors, Life Safety and Campus Security, admissions, the City of Saint Joseph and the Saint Joseph Police Department, and the Senates.

Wanting to not simply just provide another verbal statement, but seeking to catalyze action within the CSBSJU community, the Saint Ben's and the Saint John's Senates have generated this document to serve as a call to action for these seven different groups. We envision two campuses where racial bias, discrimination, and oppression do not exist. With active recognition and awareness of the issues that do arise on our campuses, continued discussion and action with important stakeholders in our institutions, and continual promotion of anti-racist education and ideals, we believe that CSBSJU can become a bastion for anti-racist ideologies and practices.

Please find the Calls to Action below.



CSBSJU, we call on you to...

- Have mandatory diversity and anti-racist training for ALL faculty and staff.
 - This training can provide invaluable education and information regarding anti-racist behaviors and actions. Having advocates amongst all faculty and staff can serve as an impetus to improve the campus culture with regard to anti-racist practice.
- Revise the Human Rights Policy.
 - Our Human Rights Policy should be updated as society progresses. We call on CSBSJU to update our Policy with special emphasis to be placed on Restorative Justice.
 - The Human Rights Policy should address blatant and intentional acts of racism on the CSBSJU campus. Specific guidelines should be established to deal with these actions. Students who decide to engage in behavior that demonstrates racism or discrimination of any kind should be held accountable for their actions.
- Draft a statement about being anti-racist, multicultural institutions.
 - Students want to know what their institutions are doing in order to create a home for every student. Students were promised to be recognized and represented. This is a way to know that they are heard, and that the institution stands with and for them.
 - Saint Ben's and Saint John's draft a statement declaring their intention to stand as anti-racist, multicultural institutions, and to ensure that anti-racist practices are promoted.
- Incorporate Anti-racist pedagogy in Orientation Programming, College Success and in all fields of study at CSBSJU.
 - Being anti-racist is important in every field. To not talk about race in a discipline is to assume that that discipline is color blind, which we know is never the case.
- Create spaces for critical conversations outside of the classroom.
 - Conversation allows for learning. When there are places to engage in conversation, education and growth thrive.
- Continue to provide a diverse range of FAE's to incorporate different cultural groups and deliver wider representation in the art experience.
 - Increasing cultural diversity in FAE programming would afford students the opportunity to broaden their perspectives while also gaining a powerful form of education via the arts experience.
- We call on the Presidents, Institutional Advancement, the CSBSJU alumni, and other stakeholders to continue the work of the Mellon Grant. Whether that be procuring a new grant once the Mellon Grant expires, institutionalizing the initiatives that the Mellon Grant has put forth, or another alternative, we seek continued funding for anti-racist strategies.
 - The Mellon Grant is an extremely valuable resource to promote anti-racist ideologies on our campus. Further promotion and use of this grant money could strongly benefit the CSBSJU community through conversation and education.

- Develop a Universal Prayer Space on campus where students of all religions can safely and comfortably practice.
 - Religion and race have strong intersectionality. All students should have equal access to practice the religion in which they believe.
- Honor the Dakhóta and Anishinaabe people who were indigenous to the land on which CSBSJU was built.
 - It is important to acknowledge the way in which we have built our community. Through this recognition, we honor those whose land was taken and rebuild relationships by providing resources and scholarships to Native American students.
- Prioritize action that addresses diversity, equity, and transformative inclusion.
 - If CSBSJU wants to create a community where all feel welcome, it is important for the students and administration to know what our non-negotiables are in regard to diversity and inclusion.
- Teach that it is okay to be uncomfortable.
 - CSBSJU needs to be an environment where it is okay to make mistakes. We want to establish a culture where we call people in instead of calling them out. Discomfort is a part of personal change and we hope to normalize this.
 - It often goes unrecognized that BIPOC students feel uncomfortable every day. It is time to become comfortable with being uncomfortable, and that this is presented as an opportunity to grow.

Students, we call on you to...

- Educate yourself.
 - Take steps to be intentional in understanding your identities, background, history, and positionality.
 - Pay attention to your language. Make sure it is anti-racist and inclusive. Do not be afraid to correct yourself if you say something wrong.
 - Ask questions if you do not know (but google also does exist).
- Be ready to be challenged.
 - We come to school to be challenged in more ways than one. If you stay in your comfort zone you won't ever learn.
- Hold other students and professors accountable for their words, actions, and inaction.
 - We all need to work together if we want to create sustainable change. If you do not know how to hold others accountable, there are resources there to help. Reach out!
- Attend club meetings and events. Be involved!
 - Cultural clubs are open to EVERYONE! Bring a friend or ask a senator to join. This is a great way where we can meet and learn from others of all different backgrounds.
- Listen to stories. Engage in intentional and difficult conversations.
 - *Be comfortable with being uncomfortable!*

Professors, we call on you to...

- Include issues of diversity/inclusion/race/sexual orientation as parts of the curriculum in ALL classes.
 - CSBSJU provides a liberal arts education that should be focused on providing a diverse and enriching curriculum. Professors should seek to incorporate discussions on issues such as white privilege, systemic racism, and how to actively be anti-racist in their classes. Difficult and intentional conversations should be had. The voices and contributions of BIPOC and marginalized scholars and figureheads, in their respective fields, should also be incorporated into the curriculum.
 - Creating environments where these discussions can be had should be a priority in all classrooms, regardless of field of study
- Outline a policy in your syllabus for students to address microaggressions, racist behaviors, etc. Include action steps that can be taken to address these issues.
 - Provide a feasible method in the syllabus outlining ways for students to go about addressing microaggressions and other racist behaviors in class. Mistakes are part of the human experience, but they serve as powerful teachers. A way to address these mistakes can bring about change through education.
- Allow a time for students to advertise events for clubs at the beginning of class periods.
 - By providing students with a platform to advertise their club events, students could extend a more personal invitation to other students for such events. This method could increase attendance, interest, and communication regarding these activities and events.
- Continue to educate yourselves on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) in order to better understand students represented both in and out of your classroom.
 - Building DEIJ education into course evaluations, the tenure process, and the promotion process could be effective ways to provide this education.
 - REMEMBER: you CAN learn from students.

Life Safety and Campus Security, we call on you to...

- Undergo diversity and anti-racist training.
 - As authority figures on our campuses, it is critical to appropriately respond to every situation that presents itself. Having a security force means equal and fair protection for all students, no matter their race/gender/sexual orientation or any other characteristic.
 - Anti-racist training and education can also provide officers who are better equipped to address racial conflicts when they do arise on our campuses.
- Hold Life Safety and Security Accountable to strong, anti-racist standards.
 - As security organizations on our campuses, it is critical to be called to the highest level of accountability. Holding these two organizations to lofty standards demands excellence in their anti-racist performance.

Admissions, we call on you to...

- Stop tokenism in marketing strategies.
 - Students of color do not want to be showcased in order for the institution to look more diverse; it is both demeaning and disrespectful to the BIPOC communities here on campus.
- Provide accurate depictions of racial diversity in marketing strategies.
 - Marketing strategies across all platforms should accurately depict the racial composition of students here on the CSBSJU campuses.
- Draft a more inclusive script for tour guides.
 - The script could talk about all the ways diversity is present at CSBSJU and how each student will be expected to engage with and be intentional about how they themselves will do the work of co-creating a community with people similar to and different than themselves.

City of Saint Joseph and Saint Joseph Police Department, we call on you to...

- Continue to build upon our working relationship with CSBSJU.
 - While the city of Saint Joseph and CSBSJU are two separate institutions, we are one community. We share the same space, and ultimately, we share one common goal- to listen to and act on the needs of our respective residents. Our coordination, cooperation, and synergy are critical for promoting respect and trust for all individuals within our communities.
- Facilitate conversation between BIPOC and marginalized students and the City Council Members/Residents on their experiences in the City of Saint Joseph.
 - Many ideologies exist amongst the students and residents of Saint Joseph. With dialogue, students and residents would be able to better understand the others' perspectives, and gaps could be mended between differing ideologies. Targeted sessions would illuminate BIPOC and marginalized students' experiences to the broader community.
- Encourage local businesses to have diverse appeal (music at Local Blend, cultural festivals, etc).
 - This allows for students to share their culture, while also providing a place in which we can learn and appreciate each other as students and as residents of Saint Joseph.
- Increase communication between the city of Saint Joseph and CSBSJU (Saint Joseph Newspaper, The Record, etc).
 - This is ensuring students and residents are staying up to date on the current and real issues happening in Saint Joseph and on Campus. Accountability and transparency are needed for an effective relationship.
 - We propose creating a space in The Record for a Saint Joseph update; we also propose creating space in the Saint Joseph Newspaper for a CSBSJU update.

Our Promise to you as Senators

In addition to the many asks and demands we have for all levels of the institution, we, as the Saint Ben's and Saint John's Senates, are pledging to commit ourselves to the following, in an effort to play our part to transform the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University to being an Anti-racist, multicultural Institutions, and to make it more welcoming to all students. We know as student leaders that we have a role to play in crafting campus culture.

- We will continue to promote conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion with courage and leadership by embracing the uncomfortable and turning our discussions into action. We will remain transparent and open by bringing our discussions and actions to the broader CSBSJU and Saint Joseph communities.
- We will use our power as both students and as student leaders to keep making bold demands from our administration.
- We will listen to, and actively reach out to students who have faced and continue to face hardships due to racism on our campus and in our community, and we will do our best to advocate for them in order to elevate their voices to administration and other relevant stakeholders.
- We will work to realize our own personal biases through discussion in all aspects of our lives, including at home, in the classroom, and in the community.
- We will promote and encourage students to attend events and organizations to learn and share in the experiences and perspectives of all students on our campuses.



