

A Joint Senate Statement Addressing Racial Exclusion at CSB/SJU

Content Warning: This statement speaks on police brutality, discrimination, and racial relations in regard to the Amir Locke murder and events at CSB/SJU and continued racial trauma to BIPOC bodies.

On February 2nd, 2022, Amir Locke was *murdered* by the Minneapolis Police Department while he was sleeping. MPD SWAT officers were executing no-knock warrants while searching for a suspect in a homicide investigation. A no-knock warrant is a type of search warrant that allows police to open the door to a residence before announcing their presence. Amir Locke, however, was not one of the suspects in the MPD homicide investigation. Locke was staying in the apartment of one of the suspects when SWAT entered and announced a search warrant. The officers kicked the couch that Locke was sleeping on, to which he woke up and revealed a handgun licensed to Locke. The officers saw the gun and one officer, Michael Hanneman, fired three shots into Locke's chest and his wrist and was later pronounced dead at a hospital. While the whole incident was recorded over 15 seconds, Amir Locke was only visibly awake for two seconds before he was shot and killed.

The murders occurring across the United States, with the most recent one being the unjustified murder of Amir Locke, broadcast the severity of a system that has failed and is still failing black people today. Police brutality among other oppressive institutions have taken thousands of lives annually and is an ongoing epidemic that has left a devastating impact on many black communities. It has also had an impact on our own community here at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU). Many black students and students of color have been affected by the brutality inflicted on them by the same institutions meant to protect and serve them. They have been marginalized, oppressed, and dismissed. These matters demand the utmost sensitivity and action. As a community, there needs to be an agreement and understanding that these matters pertain to all of us. When the system fails one of us, it is failing all of us.

We acknowledge that CSB/SJU holds high regard for Benedictine values in classrooms, workplace, the church and more. However, it is important to highlight values such as hospitality, respect for persons, and justice and fully comprehend their use and merit with specific historical events tracing back to our community. Radical hospitality also entails the importance of breaking down barriers that prevent our BIPOC community from feeling heard, seen and accepted. We hope that through this we bring awareness to living up to the Benedictine values for everyone and how radical hospitality can better reshape and embrace our students.

Over the course of the year, our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community has become more outspoken about the racialization and dehumanizing events transpiring at CSB/SJU. It is time that we call out the traumatic *macroaggressions* and *microaggressions* harming our BIPOC community. Examples include refusing to sit next to BIPOC on the Link, unnecessary staring, and use of racist language and gestures. Such discriminatory practices and experiences develop hostile environments, resulting in feelings of being unsafe and unheard. Overtime this develops into "racial battle fatigue" which is the accumulation of stress upon persons of color deriving from constant interactions with racial

injustices perpetuated by racist individuals and environments. We call on this to better understand the trauma and sentiments shared by our community, and the weight it carries.

One may think that silence and explicit racism are the primary contributors to this system that constantly oppresses BIPOC within our community. However, performative activism is equally detrimental to effective allyship. That's what distinguishes being "not racist" from being an anti-racist, the former is passive whereas the latter is active; describing an individual who opposes or condemns racism and promotes racial tolerance. We should all strive to be anti-racist, as it not only aligns with our Benedictine values, but it is also a basic human decency. Acting upon anti-racist thoughts by attending cultural and educational events, consuming media and literature from influential BIPOC, and having conversations with friends and family about BIPOC issues are all necessary to earning allyship but are merely the first steps in taking anti-racist action.

As CSB SJU students, it is our duty to educate ourselves on what is happening in our community. We acknowledge the importance of the matter at hand and must not fail to address it. In practicing Benedictine Tradition, we are called to listen to the opinions and sentiments of our peers, then act against injustice.