



Dear Members of the Juilliard Board of Trustees:

The Juilliard Black Alumni Association [JBAA] seeks to foster empowerment and community between Black alumni, current students, and faculty, with a focus on ensuring the institution's continued commitment to offer equitable and inclusive conservatory training to students of the African diaspora.

JBAA's mission is to affirm and uplift the voice of the Black Juilliard artist, promote a holistic learning environment devoid of anti-Blackness and Eurocentric bias, and maintain a vibrant network of Black alumni all over the world, who, through passionate engagement with the entire Juilliard community, work to preserve the legacy of the Black Juilliard student.

JBAA formed on May 4, 2021 after being made aware of the traumatic events of September 5, 2020. Colloquially known as #SlaverySaturday, this horrific workshop is not an anomaly. Rather, it is part of a longstanding tradition of harm caused to Black Juilliard students as a result of pedagogical and administrative decisions rooted in systemic racism.

With this knowledge, JBAA seeks to collaborate with The Juilliard School. We would like to begin with decolonizing the Drama Division. We want to aid in decentering whiteness in the pedagogy, and undoing detrimental policies of the past. Attention must be paid to the immediate action-oriented steps that will create change and move Juilliard to the forefront of equitable and inclusive conservatory training. How long does it take to diversify an institution? Looking at the student body in the Drama Division, it seems the answer is: not long once the choice is intentionally made. In order to make a diverse student body feel included and welcomed - to convert a traditionally white space into an actively anti-racist space - there must be radical change. There must be enthusiastic support for students and a strategic overhaul of racist policies, both of which are long overdue in the Drama Division.

The members of JBAA are mindful of the need for actionable change and it is in that spirit that we look forward to a swift response and request an imminent meeting with the Juilliard Board of Trustees. We request that the measures outlined below be placed on the Board's agenda for said meeting. These measures are of equal importance and do not have an order of priority.

JBAA asks:

1. Formal acknowledgement of the history of abuse and trauma inflicted on students of the African diaspora since the Drama Division's inception.
2. Publicly displayed data analytics at the end of each semester.
 - a. What is the percentage of Black teachers on staff? Other teachers of color? White teachers? Black/white/administrators of color? Black writers/white writers/writers of color being taught? Guest directors, choreographers, composers, etc? Post this data publicly in an effort to model transparency and 'effective accountability' in making the Drama Division more diverse & inclusive, with a focus toward hiring Black instructors.
 - b. Juilliard should enlist a third party firm to oversee these data analytics. JBAA asks to be an integral part of the selection process of the third party firm.
3. A clear code of conduct with an accurate detailing of consequences.
 - a. Faculty have been able to inflict trauma for decades in the Drama Division because there is no list of consequences for racist behaviors, i.e. creating unsafe and casually violent spaces for students of color.
 - b. We ask that information regarding any reports of bias be available to all interested parties, while adhering to privacy restrictions.
 - c. Juilliard needs to create a 'Pervasive Incident Command Structure' in which all perpetrators of bias - faculty, staff, or students - are held accountable for their actions and punitive measures are implemented accordingly.
 - d. Juilliard should enlist a third party firm to oversee the creation and implementation of the code of conduct. JBAA asks to be an integral part of the selection process of the third party firm.
4. A more aggressive and intentional approach to diversifying the Drama Division faculty, student body and staff.
 - a. JBAA requests space to be an integral part in the search and selection process of any new full-time faculty & students. This includes a to-be negotiated percentage of any votes that take place.
 - b. JBAA requests space to be an integral part in any and all future search and selection processes for the Director of the Drama Division. This includes a to-be negotiated percentage of any votes that take place.
 - c. JBAA asks that the Juilliard School allocate funds for hiring full-time Black faculty and guest teaching artists in the Drama Division.

5. A codified system of internal review.
 - a. Begin with a thorough investigation into the events of September 5, 2020 and the actions of the faculty involved.
 - b. Thereafter, investigate any and all complaints made against current faculty regarding racist behaviors – language, actions, and attitudes – with a clear pathway of accountability for individuals who caused harm.
 - c. The internal review system should be in place to monitor faculty practices (i.e. teaching, casting, the review process), in the hope of eliminating implicit bias and creating an equitable environment in and out of the classroom.
6. We are calling for an official partnership and affiliation with Juilliard, and look forward to potentially joining forces and working with the Office of Alumni Relations.
7. A recontextualizing of the term ‘classic’ and an incorporation of classics from the African diaspora.
 - a. A divestment from the notion of ‘classic’ denoting ‘written by a white author’, thereby expanding the canon to include authors of color into the repertoire ALL students are expected to master. An example is: making room for Black faculty members to teach material written by Black authors.
 - b. An investment in sourcing more culturally specific adaptations and reimaginings of classic texts by white authors, to allow students to embody material reflective of their identity (i.e. reimagined Shakespeare or Chekhov).
 - c. Commission Black alumni and/or bring in new works by artists currently working in the industry to create “new classics”: work that incorporates poetic, expansive, and heightened language of the African diaspora, devoid of a Eurocentric bias.
8. There needs to be a wholehearted feedback methodology that is specifically curated to guide faculty when offering notes during student reviews. (An example would be using Dr. Brené Brown’s Engaged Feedback Checklist as a starting point).
 - a. JBAA hopes to collaborate on the development of this constructive feedback methodology, with a special eye toward culturally inclusive and contextualized review & critique, i.e., viewing the Black body in a traditionally white play.
9. Employment of a trauma specialist or team who demonstrate acuity with regard to dealing with race based trauma, with priority given to hiring Black, Indigenous, and/or specialists of color.

JBAA recognizes that these issues, though specific to the Drama Division, mirror issues in the Music and Dance Divisions and are indicative of the need for institution-wide change. We are eager to collaborate with our fellow Black alumni as part of JBAA.

Moreover, we recognize that our primary focus as a Black led organization is that of uprooting anti-blackness. Nevertheless, we look forward to advocating on behalf of students of all marginalized identities and those whose identities lie at various intersections within our community. The work to dismantle white supremacy is vast--we do not take it lightly and are whole-heartedly prepared to meet this moment as we create a space that is not only inclusive, but one that celebrates the diversity of the human experience. We sincerely hope you will join us.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

JBAA