

OPEN LETTER TO THE
ADMINISTRATION OF
THE
MARYLAND INSTITUTE
COLLEGE OF ART

To the Board, President Hoi and Vice Presidents of MICA,

On Thursday, November 20, 2014, hate speech was discovered to have been carved into the elevator wall of Leake Hall. The word "negro" and the phrase "kill black people" were etched into the elevator for public viewing until covered up by the MICA administration the following day.

The incidence of this hate act has troubled the MICA community at large and has prompted those members of the student body who identify as Black or African- American and their allies into action. We are answering a call that is long overdue and is constantly at the forefront of our minds as students due to the inequitable representation of minorities on the MICA campus as well as the lack of education in regards to communities of color and ways in which it affects us here at MICA; lack of faculty diversity, and the lack of ongoing professional development for those faculty teaching about diversity in our classroom.

This marginalization of our voices has stemmed from what is perceived as a lack of desire to understand and fully support the small percentage of students to which MICA gives face tribute. The cumulative effect of this petty regard has long since inspired feelings of disenfranchisement in students of color who have come to question MICA's commitment to their wellbeing and success as artists rather than as commodities for the promotion of a falsely diverse and inclusive campus.

In this letter to the administration, we are not looking for sympathy on your behalf or any transient reparations that may come. We, instead, seek to further the dialogue on race and violence on our own terms for the promotion of indelible changes to the culture of diversity on the MICA campus. We have acknowledged that the ability to coexist is no longer sufficient and simply tolerating us is not acceptable. We are asking for respect, equal representation, and support in endeavoring to educate the MICA population in depth about people of the African diaspora and its relationship to the Baltimore community.

We are demanding that the vandal responsible for these heinous acts be identified and held accountable for their actions immediately. We are living in a society that has encouraged us to *wait* and that justice shall one day come, but we realize that the wait is impossible when we as a community are constantly subjected to these types of hate crimes in spaces we once knew to be "safe." We hope that MICA will aim to assist us by any means necessary to aid in the reparation of the aggravated student consciousness in order to further protect its multicultural identity in residence halls and beyond.

We have examined the past and lived through the present and are asking that the following measures be taken to ensure an all-encompassing, welcoming, and mutually supportive institution for the community that exists within MICA and the community we hope to create for the future. Together we will be able to fight these injustices, in order to ensure that MICA remains true to its mission of fostering an embracing and progressive institution of higher learning. We hope that MICA will use this event to distinguish itself as a defender for diversity and pluralism in the community so that we may set a positive precedent for the trajectory of *our* future.

We, the undersigned MICA students, most sincerely request:

I. Transparency around investigations that pose threats to student welfare and safety on the MICA campus that center on racial bias incidences;

A. We ask that these incidents not be swept under a rug as mere graffiti or other lesser violations.

B. We would like clarity of why this particular incident is classified as a “crime with racial bias” versus a “hate crime” and the meanings crimes of this nature carry within the community.

II. Clear, timely, and further detailed reports communicated to the entire MICA student body, faculty and staff within 24-hours as it becomes a threat to the community versus the administration notifying specific parts of the MICA community that administration feels may have been “impacted.”

III. We request that the administration review the training resources it has provided to the MICA Campus Safety department dealing with sensitivity around multiculturalism, race, and broader diversity issues that threaten student safety. We would also like to form an advisory board comprised of students, faculty and staff from multicultural backgrounds to meet with Stephen Davis and campus safety officers on a consistent basis to address issues of safety for minorities and students on this campus and how to approach a dialogue between our campus safety office and the MICA community.

IV. We request a clear and concise plan of action that outlines the ways in which the MICA administration plans to ensure the protection of students of color on this campus. We request that this plan include additional measures beyond student and faculty use of the Rave Guardian application.

V. We wholeheartedly request that the college move beyond an overall “conceptualized” diversity plan wherein it shall newly reflect that we are taught to be global citizens and move to action oriented goals that are systematic and include curricular avenues with comprehensive and accurate dialogues about race inside the classroom and its relationship to our work and existence within the MICA and Baltimore communities.

A. We request cross-disciplinary module or mini-courses that specifically address particular issues of identity and power in the arts including but not limited to race, class, privilege in a western context and its ties to the oppression of racial minorities. We strongly suggest requiring one of these courses or trainings to complete the foundation year.

B. We request modification of existing courses to include critical thinking on ethnocentric social issues. We believe the inclusion of these will limit racially biased acts from happening and strengthen the MICA Community.

VI. We request that current faculty receive mandatory diversity and allyship trainings addressing these topics centered on race, privilege and oppression in the classroom. These trainings should be focused on addressing alternative and inclusive ways of critique, presentation, and support for students of color or of multicultural backgrounds.

A. With the above in mind, we also request that there be an increase of recruitment of faculty of color.

VII. We request training for MICA students, faculty, staff and all MICA campus safety personnel to specifically address ways in which race is inextricably linked to our educational and social development as students and ways to uplift, support, and promote the growth of minority students on the MICA campus.

VIII. We also request increased funding to support the various offices that foster programming, organize and execute comprehensive educational models focused on diversity, inclusion and globalization for the MICA community and Baltimore community at large.

IX. Lastly, we request conversations about the plans of increasing student diversity in all forms, but particularly among students of color, so that the visibility of students of color and their accessibility to fair and equal treatment are present and continuous throughout their time at MICA.

A. We would like to discuss methods of minority retention, and ways in which we can intervene financially for at risk students of color. We wish to uphold your belief that retention is more financially efficient than recruitment of new students.

B. We would like to invite speakers from underrepresented groups to speak or lead workshops about their professional journey and research as they relate to race and identity.

In response to the requests that the MICA student body has outlined in this letter, we sincerely look forward to an open and honest relationship with President Hoi, the Board and Vice Presidents; and to receive a detailed response from the administration in regards to how MICA wishes to accomplish these goals within the next calendar year. We respectfully request a public response to this letter within the first two weeks of the beginning of the Spring semester.

Sincerely,

The Black Student Union and the MICA Student Community