

November 25, 2015

Dear President Sammy Hoi,

The 2015 class of the MFA in Community Arts program at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) writes to you in response to the historical, recent, and ongoing acts of hostility on campus directed toward people of color. We as a group of White, Multiracial, Latino, Black, Asian, and Indigenous students at MICA do not condone the racially targeted hate message toward Black people that occurred on November 20, 2015 in Leake Hall elevator on campus, nor the delayed communication about the instance to the MICA community. We stand in solidarity with the existing and continued efforts of the MICA Black Student Union and the Office of Diversity to address this incident and issues of inequity on campus.

Currently, one in four campus police departments in the United States are not equipped to handle an on-campus shooter, and yet a recent report stated that there were 1,410 on-campus weapons violations, 10 shootings on college campuses and 16 reported on-campus murders in 2011 (U.S. Dept of Education National Crime Statistics for Colleges). In light of these developments, we believe that disbanding racist statements on campus alone is not adequate, but that actionable items need to follow to proactively prevent future instances of violence on our own campus. We must uphold ourselves and MICA as an institution to support people of color while holding every member of our community accountable in creating a more equitable and safe environment through personal and policy-level actions.

In the interest of our shared vision of making MICA an institution that supports students from every racial and identity background, we propose that MICA administration, students, faculty, staff, and community members work together to achieve the following objectives:

- A response from MICA leadership that formally recognizes the aforementioned incident and actions it will take to prevent such acts of racial hostility in the future
- All verbal and written statements targeting one or more groups of people will be taken as literal threats and pursued to the fullest extent of the law/college policies (not dismissed as vandalism)
- A campus-wide protocol that enables us to know about and respond to all instances of violence in a timely manner (we already receive RAVE Guardian alerts about theft, robbery, and other student safety concerns; we believe we should also be informed about incidents similar to the racial threat received on campus the same day the event occurs)
- Improved access to hardcopy and online information about health and wellness services available for employees and students at MICA that will help support emotionally and physically distressed members of our community during this difficult time
- Walk-in counseling services made available to all MICA students, faculty, and staff for any individuals feeling physically or emotionally unsafe
- Increased support for the Office of Diversity by employing additional staff for Clyde Johnson
- Long-term commitment from the college to hold public on-campus dialogues on race and anti-racist strategies
- Plans to create required course(s)/orientation trainings for students and faculty on cultural sensitivity, ethics of community engagement, and ways to publicly discuss race and racism in diverse settings

As a program and as individuals we are committed to supporting all campus-wide initiatives to help (re)educate and spread awareness about racial equity, promote anti-racist actions and mindsets, and problem solve how we as a community will achieve these outcomes together. As graduate students whose program is located in East Baltimore at MICA PLACE, we would like to be actively involved in the continued discussion of how to best address issues that arise on campus around race, equity, and difference.

In Solidarity,

MFA in Community Arts, Class of 2015

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