

To Be Black at Jones: An Open Letter to Further the Racial Conversation

For Our Administration, Teachers, Peers, and Community at Large

Foreword by Cole Francis - Class of 2022

To be Black at Jones is to strategically move through the halls, code-switching with your peers as a method of social acceptance.

To be Black at Jones looks like rarely seeing people who look like *you* and rarely having *your* perspective represented in outdated texts with falsified histories.

To be Black at Jones is experiencing microaggressions at all points in your schedule: repeatedly being called the name of the other Black kid in class, watching white peers try on durags, and others attempting to use your vernacular.

To be Black at Jones is to hear your peers use the n-word or other derogatory terms, yet avoid speaking out because you'd rather not feel ostracized or outnumbered.

To be Black at Jones is feeling impostor syndrome in the school you legitimately tested into, but your teachers still dismiss your comments, your classmates appropriate your culture, and you are held to a different standard in every academic space you walk into.

Can *you* see the issue from *our* perspective? As the Jones Black Coalition, and Black students at large, we are asking for an acknowledgement and a more reflective teaching of America's history, the complex and overlooked version, the history that has contributed to the contemporary Black experience in America.

We seek to eradicate the actions that contribute to the overwhelming feelings that Black Jones students experience. We challenge our peers to unify and amplify their voices, especially while viewing the maltreatment, dismissal, and racial targeting of your peers.

The Black Coalition insists on an expansion of actionable steps, in collaboration with other prominent affinity groups at Jones, that Jones administration plans on developing with us on a larger scale. In doing this, we can collaboratively promote the history of Black Americans, beyond the tragedy of slavery. We will not be silenced.

Actionable Steps:

1. Many in our community are pleased to know that teachers and administration are partaking in various forms of anti-racist training; however, we would like there to be **more transparency and explanation** of the intention of the training, including **monthly updates** from Jones Administrators about specific ways in which teachers and faculty are applying their newfound knowledge.
2. We propose that our peers experience similar **anti-racist lessons** in their social science classes and participate in the Harvard **implicit bias test** during Black History Month. This will allow students to identify their biases and constructively develop ways to minimize these perceptions.
3. Development of an incident reporting **forum platform, in partnership with other student-led groups**, for students to submit their **experiences of racial tension/targeting** from their peers and teachers that will **not be neglected** and will be taken into account for further consequences.
4. Jones Administration to release a **statement** that demonstrates active concern for **engaging and developing improved quality of experience for Black students**. This may come in the form of participating in needed inclusive discussions about race; collaboration with student organizations is needed to deepen and broaden history lessons that explore the Black plight, beyond slavery.

- Jones Black Coalition

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