

BLACK COACHES & ROWERS ASSOCIATION

March 28th, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

On April 16th, 2021 the Big Ten conference teams and their associate members are scheduled to gather for a weekend of racing in Bethel, Ohio. While we are excited to see racing occur this year, we would like to inquire about the decision, and approval process, of choosing to host this regatta in a location that has raised national concerns. Attached is one of many articles concerning Bethel, Ohio for your review: (['It got ugly': What happened when Black Lives Matter protests came to small town Ohio](#)). The actions that transpired last summer, in Bethel, were so alarming that the BCRA is actively in discussion with USRowing about moving away from this venue until Clermont County can provide stronger assurances regarding the safety of BIPOC student athletes, coaches, and spectators.

Selecting Bethel, Ohio as your racing location signals a disregard for the Black experience and the trauma associated with being vilified for wanting to feel safe, protected, and supported. While the race course itself is not the issue, the concern here is centered around what seems to be a position held by a plurality of Bethel's community. We are aware that discussions have taken place within your conference, organizing an effort to wear shirts that signal a message of unity and support for the BIPOC experience. But what have Bethel's community/municipal leaders done to create opportunities for healing and understanding? Have you confirmed that athletes/coaches will be safe to perform this gesture in Bethel? Are all teams in attendance planning to participate? Have Black athletes/coaches specifically been informed of your intention to demonstrate solidarity for their experiences? Can you ensure that they will not be targeted as a result (as they cannot remove their pigment with the ease of removing a garment)?

While this is not an exhaustive list, our hope is that you can answer the following questions for us:

- 1.) How/Why was this location selected? Who is the decision maker on these matters? What amount of diversity is present when these decisions are made?
- 2.) Were any black coaches/athletes consulted on this decision before contracts were signed to book this location?
- 3.) Why were Dayton, Ohio or Cleveland, Ohio not considered as alternatives for hosting this event? 4.) What values do you require (if any) from vendors, sponsors, and/or from venues when planning competitions?
- 5.) Does this decision to host a regatta in Bethel uphold the values of the Big Ten conference?

We are aware that based on timing and contractual obligations, that you will not be able to change your location this year. Our hope moving forward is that you will be more intentional and equitable in your organizational efforts. We welcome the opportunity to open a productive dialogue between our organizations. Please provide clarification regarding the questions listed above at your earliest convenience. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

The BCRA Membership