

Dear Rice Community,

Several students from the Student Diversity Union (SDU) brought some concerns to the Administration regarding the selection of this year's patron saint for the school. The following are points of clarifications, as well as outcomes to these important and ongoing dialogues.

The Patron Saint Selection

Each year, Rice has the chaplain select a handful of saints whose narratives share a specific and relevant theme. This year's selection of saints, as well as the summer reading choice, [*Just Mercy*](#), intended to reflect the current social climate and civil unrest in our country. However, in failing to properly share this reasoning, many students of color understood the selection as a [performative action](#).

The [Racial Undertones](#) In The Saint Choice

Though the saints had inspiring stories to tell, some of the descriptions presented to the student body exemplified the negative [stereotypes](#) regularly applied to people of color, focusing primarily on slavery and violence rather than their good works. Several students interpreted "the Black" in the chosen patron saint's title as a comparison of his race to his sins. Therefore, after hearing the name [Saint Moses "The Black,"](#) students felt uncomfortable. Black students in particular shared that they felt surprised, dejected, unappreciated, disappointed, and frustrated: his moniker "the Black" felt like a [microaggression](#) that equated blackness (or darkness) with sin and whiteness with purity. This is not a theme we want to promote.

SDU Meetings and Moving Forward

SDU members have had family attend Rice when the [BIPOC](#) population was minimal, and though the number has since increased, there is more to do. The administration looks forward to collaborating with SDU members in the life-long work of continuing to foster an anti-racist community, increase [cultural competency](#), and cultivate fruitful dialogue. In a society that

perpetuates the degradation of people based on race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc., it is crucial that Rice takes accountability and action to change how we view and treat one another. In adherence to the heart and mission of Rice, we must set a precedent that reflects the Catholic tenets and [teachings of social justice](#) in order to create meaningful social change. That change starts in schools—it starts here.

Peace and all that is Good.

Resources

[*Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson \(New York Times review\)*](#)

[*Performative Definition*](#)

[*Performative Allyship: What Are The Signs and Why Leaders Get Exposed*](#)

[*Racial Undertones Definitions*](#)

[*Example Sentences using “Racial Undertones”*](#)

[*Stereotype Definition*](#)

[*How Students Experience and Cope with Racist Stereotypes*](#)

[*The Blackness of St. Moses the Strong*](#)

[*Microaggressions Are A Big Deal: How To Talk Them Out And When To Walk Away*](#)

[*Examples of Microaggressions*](#)

[*Addressing Racial Microaggressions in Our Schools*](#)

[*BIPOC: What Does it Mean?*](#)

[*Cultural Competency*](#)

[*Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*](#)