



The State University of New York  
Student Assembly

1617-080  
Lopez, Jemmott, van Reenan

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### **MEMORANDUM 1617-080**

**TO:** Members of the Student Assembly

**FROM:** Victoria Lopez, Co-Chair, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; Jarius Jemmott, Co-Chair, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; Eusebio Omar van Reenen, Oswego Student Association

**ENDORSED:** The Student Association at SUNY Oswego, Rules Committee

**DATE:** April 8, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Black Solidarity Day

#### **Action Requested**

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee requests that SUNY SA recognize Black Solidarity Day as a holiday, and thus a day of diversity and inclusion to be celebrated annually on campuses SUNY-wide. That SUNY SA allow students to observe the day needed to get educated on the meaning of diversity and the history of Black Solidarity Day. Through ensuring that no graded material, tests or examinations are assigned or due on the first Monday of November, and students are not held accountable for their absence from class granted they have informed their professor of their absence in advance.

#### **Resolution**

I recommend that the of the Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNYSA) adopt the following resolution:

Whereas Black Solidarity Day is a cultural holiday created in 1969 with the purpose of recognizing the “social, political, and economic consequences that would ensue if all Black people were to disappear for one day,<sup>1</sup>” with its occurrence on the Monday before election day to promote the role that marginalized community voters have on our election process and the value the underrepresented community has in our economy; and

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<sup>1</sup> "Black Solidarity Day." Wells College. Accessed November 28, 2016. <https://www.wells.edu/news/wells-weekly/black-solidarity-day>.

Whereas On this holiday, people of color are encouraged to demonstrate the impact that the black community has on our society<sup>2</sup>, and create awareness in society of the need for discriminatory and equal opportunities young black students and students across minorities need to have to help further the economy as professions and young intellects across academics; and

Whereas Black Solidarity Day has grown into a more recognized and vastly celebrated day by all marginalized community groups, regardless of race and religious affiliation, “as a day of discussion and a time for everyone, no matter of what race or education, to discuss how we all affect each other’s lives<sup>3</sup>”; and

Whereas Many universities celebrate the holiday by working to reveal the importance of including marginalized community groups in our society, celebrating diversity and inclusion, and empowering the voices of people of color across minorities, with fellow SUNY schools Albany, Binghamton, Potsdam and New Paltz and, recently, SUNY Oswego leading the charge; and

Whereas Campuses celebrating Black Solidarity Day has resolved that “no tests, quizzes, or graded material of any kind should be issued or due on Black Solidarity Day, and that students who are participating in Black Solidarity Day should notify their professors beforehand, and that these students will not be held accountable for absence on Black Solidarity Day<sup>4</sup>”; and

Whereas In response to the recent rigidity of the political atmosphere, hateful and intolerant acts have occurred in several SUNY campuses (Geneseo, New Paltz and Purchase)<sup>5</sup>, resulting in tension and hostility towards marginalized and international students, making the advocacy to celebrate our diversity on Black Solidarity Day, paramount, now more than ever to combat discrimination and xenophobic attacks; and

Whereas In an open letter to all New York Students following the abovementioned onslaught against marginalised students, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, reiterated New York’s stance against condemning all forms of discrimination against students and members of the community, and requested

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<sup>2</sup> "Summary of The History and Meaning Behind Black Solidarity Day" *My True Sense*. October 14, 2016. Accessed November 28 2016. <https://mytruesense.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> "Policies: Black Solidarity Day" *The State University of New York at New Paltz, Undergraduate Catalog*. Accessed November 28, 2016. [https://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies\\_blacksolidarity.html](https://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies_blacksolidarity.html).

<sup>5</sup> Frances Marion Platt, "Racist Graffiti in SUNY New Paltz Dorm Galvanizes anti-Trump Protest March," *Hudson Valley One*. November 14, 2016. <https://hudsonvalleyone.com/2016/11/14/racist-graffiti-in-suny-new-paltz-dorm-galvanizes-anti-trump-protest-march/>

"Swastika and Trump Graffiti Found in Geneseo Campus Dorm" *Time Warner Cable News*. November 12, 2016. Accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.twcnews.com/nys/rochester/news/2016/11/12/swastika-and-trump-graffiti-found-in-geneseo-campus-dorm.html>

"Swastika Found in SUNY Purchase College Dorm" *LOHOUD The Journal News*. November 21, 2016. Accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/crime/2016/11/21/swastikas-suny-purchase-college/94208382/>

schools hold trainings to combat intolerance and safeguard New York's students, stating that "The State of New York has strict laws against hate crimes and discrimination and we fully and firmly enforce them. It is illegal in this state to target, harass or discriminate against a person because of his or her race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation."(Appendix 1); and, therefore be it

Resolved that SUNY SA respond to Governor Cuomo's call for combat and should join the aforementioned campuses and move to promote, recognize and encourage students of all races and cultures to celebrate the day on all SUNY campuses, by attending educational and cultural events addressing black power and liberation, lectures and plays on diversity inclusion and racial inequality, and film screenings on topics of discrimination; and therefore, be it,

Resolved that the SUNY SA recognize the existence of Black Solidarity Day on the first Monday of November of each year, and encourage campus SGA's to work together with their campus Black Student Unions and other cultural organizations to organize educational events that commemorate diversity and inclusion on our campuses; and, be it further,

Resolved that the SUNY SA urge the Board of Trustees to amend the college class attendance catalog to include Black Solidarity Day, requiring that no tests, quizzes, or graded material of any kind be issued or due on that day, while excusing absences for students who notify professors beforehand; and, be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York call on each campus include annual educational programming facilitated by the Chief Diversity Office and in consultation with Black Student Unions, student government associations, and other student groups where applicable to coincide with Black Solidarity Day; and, be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York calls on each campus' Chief Academic Officer to add "Black Solidarity Day" as the first Monday in November to the future academic calendars; and, finally, be it

Resolved that the SUNY SA will forward copies of this resolution to the Board of Trustees, SUNY Chancellor Zimpher, Executive Committee of the University Faculty Senate, The Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion's Diversity Task Force, Executive Committee of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, SUNY Campus Presidents, SUNY student governing bodies, and all other parties necessary for review and implementation.

## Appendix 1



**State of New York**  
**Executive Chamber**  
Albany 12224  
November 20, 2016

**Andrew M. Cuomo**  
GOVERNOR

Dear Students:

After the harsh and ugly rhetoric of the campaign, many of you are concerned about what might happen next.

Let me be clear: This is the State of New York, not a state of fear. We will not tolerate hate or racism.

We have been and always will be a place where people of many backgrounds have come to seek freedom and opportunity. Almost all who live here can trace their roots to someplace else.

We cherish our diversity. We find strength in our differences. Whether you are gay or straight, Muslim or Christian or Jewish or Buddhist, rich or poor, black or white or Latino or Asian, man or woman, cisgender or transgender, we respect all people in the State of New York.

The Statue of Liberty is a proud symbol of American values, and she stands in our harbor. We feel a special responsibility to make her offer of refuge and hope a reality every day.

As long as you are here, you are New Yorkers. You are members of our community, and we will stand up for you.

The State of New York has strict laws against hate crimes and discrimination and we fully and firmly enforce them. It is illegal in this state to target, harass or discriminate against a person because of his or her race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation. We are a tolerant people, and cannot and will not let our freedoms be undermined.

New York State has a toll-free hotline where people can report incidents of bias and discrimination. Our responsibility is to protect all who are here, whether native-born or immigrant, whether documented or not. The hotline strengthens our efforts. Contacting us will not affect your immigration status.

New Yorkers who have experienced bias or discrimination should call the toll-free hotline at (888) 392-3644 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday - Friday.

**If you want to report a crime or fear for your safety, call 911 immediately.**

New Yorkers feel a particular affection for young immigrants. For centuries, our state has thrived on the energy and ambition of the young people seeking to build their lives here. Your intelligence, your creativity, your idealism enriches us all. You are welcome here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew M. Cuomo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "C".

ANDREW M. CUOMO

## Appendix 2

The State University of New York, Student's Assembly  
Spring 2017 Conference  
March 22, 2017

Dear Voting Delegates,

Firstly, we would like to thank you for your driven advocacy in uplifting our campuses. Dually commending the work that each campus' presidents, their vice presidents and members of their Student Governments/Associations do in ensuring that student clubs and organizations are given equal opportunity to be a part of their campus community and prosper!

With that said, we would like to share that in your venture of ensuring the prosperity of student organizations that you recognize the vitality of adequate prosperity for not just cultural clubs, but for students from different cultural backgrounds and minority groups. As members of cultural organizations on campus we understand that although extensive efforts are funneled into ensuring diversity and inclusion is vastly implemented in the student body, there is still room for improvement in this aspect on all SUNY campuses. Thus, as the urgent need to celebrate diversity grows not just on SUNY campuses, but in our society, too, we urge you to respond to this call to spread the importance of identifying that there's strength in our differences. Black Solidarity Day answers to that very call. It is more than just a day of solidarity, but has grown into the very notion of acknowledging our cultural differences and educating our peers on the push for a society inclusive of all minority groups.

Subsequently, the voices of our club members and students from all races call, not just for the acknowledgement of need to celebrate our diversity, but for the recognition of Black Solidarity Day and for the liberty for all students to observe it. Many of other culturally affiliated clubs and students from minority groups are not able to observe this day as the academic policies of their campuses do not permit them to. As a result, we are forced to find alternate means of celebrating this day.

Student leaders, we believe in your passionate leadership to bring about change to fellow SUNY campuses, to bring about change on your own individual campuses and to bring about change for the student body at large. This is the change we need, it's the change students across all minorities are calling for and the very change that results in a more inclusive campus which is at the basis of SUNY's mission. We have carried the concerns of our peers and presented a solution, but this change now starts with you.

Join us, and promote Black Solidarity Day as a day of diversity and inclusion for all SUNY students.

Thank you for your advocacy!  
Sincerely,  
Black Students Union

Association of Black Psychologist

African Students Organization  
Latino Student's Union

International Students Association  
Caribbean Students Association

SUNY Oswego