



BOWDOIN STUDENT GOVERNMENT
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

Office of the President of Bowdoin Student Government

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**BSG Assembly Condemns
Incident of Cultural Appropriation,
Stands in Solidarity With Students**

At 9:30pm on Wednesday, 28 October 2015, the General Assembly of the Bowdoin Student Government voted on a resolution to take a definitive stand on an incident of cultural appropriation that took place on Bowdoin's campus on Thursday, 22 October 2015, and the anonymous attacks that took place on social media in the aftermath. The Assembly, representing the entire student body of Bowdoin, stands by all students who were injured and affected by the incident.

The resolution was referred to the Assembly for consideration by the Executive Committee in response to calls to action from the Bowdoin African American Society, various student organizations, and many individual students. The Assembly believes that it is its duty to respond to these calls to action, as it is constitutionally bound to refine the College's most important goal—the education of students in a residential community. The Assembly asserts that issuing a statement of solidarity is the right action that should be taken by student leaders in such a situation. Moreover, the Assembly acknowledges that this incident is not the first of its kind to occur on Bowdoin's campus. The Assembly is resolved to help educate all students on the inappropriateness of these acts and their inherently racist nature.

To that end, the General Assembly adheres to the definition of cultural appropriation as the manifestation of racism where there exists a power dynamic in which members of a

dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systemically oppressed by that dominant group, perpetuates racist stereotypes, and/or misrepresents a peoples culture.

In affirming this definition of cultural appropriation and the disrespectful nature of such action, the General Assembly affirms the College's commitment to maintaining an environment that fosters respect for the rights of all and for the differences among all members of the Bowdoin community.

The General Assembly furthermore asserts that such behavior as displayed on 22 October 2015 and the anonymous attacks in the aftermath are unacceptable and do not reflect inclusive values. Such behavior will not and should not be tolerated by the Bowdoin community. The Assembly is resolved to use this situation as a teaching and learning moment for all students. It is the hope of the Assembly to move forward with a restorative vision and progress with the help of all parties.

A Resolution

WHEREAS, cultural appropriation refers to a power dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systemically oppressed by that dominant group, perpetuates racist stereotypes, and/or misrepresents people's culture;

WHEREAS, cultural appropriation is distinctly different from and not to be conflated with issues of political correctness or freedom of expression (in that cultural appropriation perpetuates the exploitation of certain cultural aspects of marginalized groups in American society, allowing the identity of marginalized groups to be trivialized in the name of freedom of expression, when in reality individuals identifying with these groups are treated poorly due to said stereotypes);

WHEREAS, on Thursday, October 22nd, 2015 the Bowdoin sailing team organized a "gangster" party, during which members of the team appropriated aspects of black culture;

WHEREAS, this act of cultural appropriation is offensive for the previously stated reasons, is disrespectful, creates an environment where students of color, particularly black students, feel unsafe, and contradicts our goal to refine the education of students in an inclusive residential community;

WHEREAS, our nation and our Bowdoin community continue to struggle to address issues of difference, especially race;

WHEREAS, we promote and prioritize justice for systemically marginalized people;

WHEREAS, the Bowdoin African American Society, together with support from other student organizations, individual students, the Bowdoin Student Government, and the Bowdoin sailing team has resolved to address the aforementioned party for purposes of restorative justice and the education of our Bowdoin community;

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the members of Bowdoin Student Government, convened in General Assembly—

Assert the above definition of cultural appropriation, demonstrate how it is unacceptable, indicate support and solidarity for students who feel marginalized by the Bowdoin sailing team's actions, promote honest conversations about issues of race and cultural appropriation, and urge the student body to think deeply about how their actions may infringe upon others' identity.

Be it further,

Resolved, that this Assembly authorize and order the President to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the President of the College and the Dean of Student Affairs.

Adopted in General Assembly: 28 October 2015.

BY ORDER OF BOWDOIN STUDENT GOVERNMENT