



Coalition for Social Justice

The Coalition for Social Justice's
Full Report
on the
St. John's University – School of Law's
Anti-Racist Agenda
Following the Racial Justice Reckoning of Summer 2020

Acknowledgments

The Coalition for Social Justice would like to express our deepest appreciation to several factions of the St. John's University School of Law community.

We are specifically grateful to our peers who have partnered and co-sponsored our various efforts; to our faculty advisors; to the 12 faculty members who served on our Dialogue Day Panel; to the Alumni Association and the Alumni of Color Chapter; and to the school Administration for their support.

Further, we are particularly grateful to the former Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Kamille Dean. Her emotional support and organizational guidance have left a tremendous impact on our organization. We wish her the best in her next endeavor.

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Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose	6
Historical Background	7
CSJ SJU Law Anti-Racist Agenda Progress Report	11
CSJ SJU Law Anti-Racist Agenda Prospectus	26
SJU Law Student Leadership Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion Contract	31

INTRODUCTION

For the last 6 months, the constant theme for all Americans has been change. The impacts of COVID-19 have been transformative for everyone, including law students. Not only have students been forced to transition to online courses, but they have also had to balance their studies with the numerous unprecedented challenges that the pandemic has created in their personal lives. Juxtaposed to these dramatic departures from the norm, the stagnant nature of the glaring inequities for Black Americans in the justice system has become ever more apparent and painful.

On February 23rd, Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed by two white men while jogging in Glynn County, Georgia. Travis McMichael and his father, Gregory, chased Mr. Arbery down in a pickup truck, armed with a .357 Magnum handgun. After confrontation, Mr. Arbery was fatally shot by Travis McMichael. For months after his death, no arrests were made. In fact, the two men who ended Ahmaud Arbery's life were not arrested and charged until video footage of the incident went viral via social media sparking public demands for justice. If not for said video, many reasonably believe it may have been years before any substantive action was taken. As law students, this failure of the criminal justice system was particularly devastating.

A month later, on March 13th, Breonna Taylor was fatally shot in her home by Louisville Metro Police Department officers. The officers intended to arrest her ex-boyfriend, Jamarcus Glover. The officers, with court approval for a "no-knock" entry, entered Ms. Taylor's apartment, waking her and her boyfriend up from their sleep. Ms. Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, mistook the officers for intruders when they barged into the apartment, breaking the door off its hinges. Allegedly acting in what he believed to be self-defense, Walker fired his gun once and hit one of the officers. The officers fired back multiple times. As a result, Ms. Taylor was shot five times and struggled to breathe for at least five minutes after she was shot. Counter to standard practice, an ambulance on standby outside the apartment was told to leave about an hour before the raid. When the officers called the ambulance back, Ms. Taylor was not given medical attention and instead, the officer allegedly shot by Walker received aid. As a result, Ms. Taylor died, most likely on the scene. Yet, on the incident report LMPD listed her injuries as, "none."

Soon after Taylor's death, Walker was charged with attempted murder of a police officer. The charges were later dropped, but Walker is still in fear of being arrested and charged for standing his ground with a legally registered firearm. At this time, only one officer from this incident has been indicted. A Louisville grand jury charged officer Brett Hankison with three counts of first-degree wanton endangerment. It has been clarified that these charges are with relation to the gun shots that pierced the wall of a neighboring apartment. No officers have been charged for the shots that took Taylor's life.

A few months later, on May 25th, George Floyd was choked to death by a police officer. That day, Minneapolis police officers received a call from a convenience store, alleging that Floyd had bought cigarettes using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. Soon after the call, the officers arrested Floyd by pinning him on the ground. One of the officers, Derek Chauvin, then proceeded to press his knee into Floyd's neck for the next 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Throughout that time, Floyd was handcuffed, face down in the street, while two other officers further restrained him. The fourth officer, concerned by the public, prevented onlookers from intervening. As he was pinned down, Floyd was heard calling out for his mother, who had passed away. He was also heard telling the officers that he could not breathe approximately 12 times. During the final two minutes, even as George Floyd laid motionless without a pulse, Chauvin's knee still sunk into his neck. Most who came across the scene pulled out their phones, started recording, and urged the officers to stop. These bystander videos also went viral on social media and added to growing civil unrest.

The deaths of Black Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery sparked outrage in the United States, and across the globe. Their deaths, along with other instances of police violence and misconduct, dating back multiple generations, led to mass protests where a myriad of communities voiced their dissatisfaction. The conversation of racial disparities in the criminal justice system has once again emerged at the forefront of the United States' conscience. Clearly, we have not done enough as a country to counteract and eradicate systemic and institutional anti-Black racism.

In response to these deaths, St. John's Law's Black Law Students Association ("BLSA") reached out to the law school community and invited them to stand in solidarity with their Black law student peers. 19 other student organizations explicitly and publicly expressed their support. St. John's Law's Coalition for Social Justice ("CSJ") then partnered with BLSA to plan and deliver a "Dialogue Day" event where various student organizations vouched to take steps that would advance racial justice. This would mark the beginning of St. John's University School of Law's adoption of an ambitious anti-racist agenda.

PURPOSE

With this report CSJ aims to lead by example and embody the principles and values that we expect from other student organizations and the St. John's Law faculty and administration. Through the publishing of these documents we seek to: (1) hold ourselves accountable to our purported investment in an anti-racist agenda; (2) be transparent in how we evaluate our own actions as well as the actions of our peers, faculty members and the administration; and (3) deliver on our pledge to document and codify, in unequivocal terms, the standard of commitment to the progressive pursuit and promotion of equity and justice to which all student organizations will assent.

In publishing these documents [particularly the "Progress Report" and "Prospectus"] we by no means intend to set the precedent or assume the role of the primary or sole arbiter or continual source of evaluative commentary on the St. John's Law anti-racist agenda. We find that it is our role to provide such commentary on occasion as to bring awareness. However, we make no representation in this report of any commitment to produce a periodical of that nature. Nor do we claim any monopoly on the responsibility of such evaluation and observation. This document is primarily a substantive institutional follow up to our June 4th, 2020 Dialogue Day event. We believe calls to action are hollow if not accompanied by collaboration, observation, accounting, and reflection.

We also hope that this document may constitute a sufficient and beneficial account and description of our efforts and the efforts of our peers, that can be used by others as a model. We do not claim to have perfected this work in our school, nor do we claim to be experts. Yet, part of the work is the sharing of methodology, success, and challenges in order to aid others on their journeys. We hope other institutions and student-led organizations at every level find value in this report.

Historical Background

This historical note highlights that this country's legal system is largely responsible for a lion's share of the prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and violence exacted against Black people. We, as law students and future practitioners, being cognizant of this fact, feel it is our specific duty, in the interest of justice, to identify and advocate for the necessary institutional and political changes. This is the source of our zeal and continued commitment to the cause represented by this document, St. John's Law's adoption of a robust anti-racist agenda. An anti-racist agenda sets goals for the future. To better do so in a productive way, we must first acknowledge history and take note of the legal foundations of racial injustice in the United States.

From 1619 until June 19th, 1865, American chattel slavery exploited, abused, and killed Black people¹, as our legal system denied them full personhood under the Constitution². Throughout slavery, African Americans contributed significantly to the gross domestic product of this nation through cotton, sugar, and tobacco production. Their unpaid labor amounted to a large-scale wage theft of staggering proportions. The end of the American Civil War brought hope, as General Sherman of the Union Army issued Field Order No. 15, granting forty acres of abandoned and captured Southern land to certain freed

¹ Theodore Weld, *Theodore Weld on American Slavery* (1839), in *ABOLITIONISTS: A COLLECTION OF THEIR WRITING* 164, 164–65 (Louis Ruchames ed., Putnam 3d ed., 1963) (describing the horrors of slavery, which will not be repeated here to avoid the unnecessary perpetuation of Black trauma, Weld, an Abolitionist, addressed his readers as if they were a jury). Weld stated,

You have common sense, and conscience, and a human heart—pronounce upon it. You have a wife, or a husband, a child, a father, a mother, a brother or a sister—make the case your own, make it theirs, and bring in your verdict. The case of Human Rights against Slavery has been adjudicated in the court of conscience times innumerable. The same verdict has always been rendered—'Guilty'; the same sentence has always been pronounced, 'Let it be accursed'; and human nature, with her million echoes, has rung it round the world in every language under heaven, 'Let it be accursed. Let it be accursed'.

Id.

² U.S. CONST. art. I, § 2, cl. 3 (requiring that direct taxes be apportioned among the states based on population, counting slaves as three-fifths of a person); *id.* (apportioning representation in the House among the states based on population, counting slaves as three-fifths of a person).

slaves in South Carolina, which came to be known as “forty acres and a mule.”³ However, the amount of land provided by that order diminished from forty to twenty acres, with a fee imposed of one dollar and fifty cents per acre.⁴

Subsequently, the Freedman’s Bureau Act allowed for refugees from the war and freedmen loyal to the union to purchase abandoned and captured land of former slave owners⁵. However, President Johnson, who initially vetoed the act, as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (only to be overridden by Congress, in a rare assertion of that power⁶), ultimately ordered that the lands seized by the union be returned to their former owners.⁷ At that time, many former slaves were “anxious to rent or buy lands, to which the [white] planters [would] not consent.”⁸ This rendered many former slaves dispossessed, without savings, property ownership, or economic reparations.⁹ Gradually, in the place of “forty acres and a mule,”

³ An Act to Establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees (Freedmen's Bureau Act), 13 Stat. 507, ch. 90 (1865), reprinted in THE FORTY ACRES DOCUMENTS: WHAT DID THE UNITED STATES REALLY PROMISE THE PEOPLE FREED FROM SLAVERY? (Comm’n for Positive Educ. 1994) [hereinafter The Forty Acres Documents] (The text of this initial order did not actually include the provision for a mule).

⁴ Adjoa A. Aiyetoro, *Formulating Reparations Litigation through the Eyes of the Movement*, 58 N.Y.U. ANN. SURV. AM. L. 457, 461 (2001) (“The diminution of General Sherman's Field Order No. 15 from forty to twenty acres and the imposition of a fee for the land was the first of many betrayals that African descendants would experience as they navigated the road to freedom and equality”).

⁵ *Id.* (writing that “This Act gave the War Department the authority to make certain provisions and land available to “refugees and freedmen” in “rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced by the operations of the army”) (citing The Forty Acres Documents).

⁶ Steven G. Calabresi & Andrea Matthews, *Originalism and Loving v. Virginia*, 2012 B.Y.U. L. REV. 1393, 1405 (2012) (writing that the Civil Rights Act of 1866 originally included the provision that “there shall be no discrimination in civil rights or immunities among the inhabitants of any State or Territory of the United States on account of race, color, or previous condition of slavery”). Ultimately, the House eliminated that provision from the Act. *Id.*, at 1407.

⁷ Oscar Zeichner, *The Transition from Slave to Free Agricultural Labor in the Southern States*, 13 AGRICULTURAL HISTORY 22, 24 (1939).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

a sharecropping system took hold, in which Black farm tenants cultivated crops for low wages, on property where they could not build equity, often on the same plantations where they had been enslaved.¹⁰

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, southern legislatures passed Jim Crow laws, which enforced racial segregation and limited Black Americans' access to municipal spaces, properties, and political activities, such as voting.¹¹ While Jim Crow laws clearly excluded Black people from resources reserved for white people, other legal developments excluded Black Americans in even subtler ways, such as the administration of the 1935 Social Security Act, which helped create our modern welfare system.¹² While the act provided unemployment benefits and old-age social security benefits, it made two categorical exclusions: domestic workers and farm laborers, both of which were disproportionately people of color.¹³ Even if the reason for that exclusion was not intentional racial animus, as many historians have theorized,¹⁴ the law has ultimately rendered Black people disproportionately excluded from the protections of the U.S. social safety net.

Near the end of World War II, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (known as the "GI Bill") provided housing loans, educational support, and unemployment benefits to veterans, but many Black veterans were denied those benefits.¹⁵ Because veteran benefits were administered at the local level,

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Frances L. Edwards & Grayson Bennett Thomson, *The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created through Jim Crow Laws*, 12 BERKELEY J. AFR. AM. L. & POL'Y 145, 155 (2010) (writing that violating Jim Crow laws and "crossing racial lines carried with it, for the most part, negative repercussions through fines and/or imprisonment").

¹² Richard Rodems & H. Luke Shaefer, *Left Out: Policy Diffusion and the Exclusion of Black Workers from Unemployment Insurance*, 40 SOC. SCI. HIST. 385, 385 (2016).

¹³ *Id.* at 388. At the time of the law's passing, 40 percent of white Americans did not qualify for its benefits, while 65 percent of African Americans were excluded, with up to 80 percent of African American workers excluded in heavily agricultural regions of South. *Id.*

¹⁴ See Larry DeWitt, *The decision to exclude agricultural and domestic workers from the 1935 Social Security Act*, 70 (4) SOC. SEC. BULL. 70 49 (2010).

¹⁵ Roy L. Brooks, *Making the Case for Atonement in Post-Racial America*, 14 J. GENDER RACE & JUST. 665, 675 (2011) (writing that "its social benefits so effectively excluded black veterans that Charles G. Bolte, chairman of the American Veterans Committee in the 1940s, observed that it was 'as though the GI Bill had been earmarked 'For White Veterans Only' (quoting Charles G. Bolt & Louis Harris, *Our Negro*

segregationist and racist administrators of loans often excluded Black veterans, giving the vast majority of home loans, business loans, and farm loans to white veterans.¹⁶ While building equity from home ownership has been a primary way for white Americans to grow wealth, Black Americans have been largely denied that same opportunity. Black people have fought for their rights throughout American history, but they have faced constant barriers to advancement.¹⁷ Banks have historically refused to provide home loans to Black Americans, often solely because of the color of their skin.¹⁸ This has created gaps in public school funding and educational resources for Black children, as public school funding largely comes from, in addition to state grants, local property taxes.¹⁹

The points contained in this historical note represent just a few of the many ways in which systemic racism in the United States has impacted law and policy, from housing law and labor law, to taxation and voter suppression laws.²⁰ Moving forward, at the heart of this initiative for racial justice, the Coalition for Social Justice will remain cognizant of these intersectional legal issues and we urge our peers to do the same. In doing so, we will be better advocates for change.

Veterans, in PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLETS 28 (Pub. Affairs Comm., Inc., Public Affairs Pamphlet no. 128, 1947).

¹⁶ Ira Katznelson & Suzanne Mettler, *On Race and Policy History: A Dialogue about the G.I. Bill*, 6(3) PERSPECTIVES ON POL. 519, 522 (2008).

¹⁷ Keith N. Hylton & Vincent D. Rougeau, *Lending Discrimination: Economic Theory, Econometric Evidence, and the Community Reinvestment Act*, 85 GEO. L. J. 237, 241 (1996) (Banks would mark in red Black population areas on maps, which has deprived many Black Americans of the lending and equity that would have come with home ownership).

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ See Jeanette M. Curtis, *A Fighting Chance: Inequities in Charter School Funding and Strategies for Achieving Equal Access to Public School Funds*, 55 HOWARD L.J. 1057 (2012) (citing Peter Enrich, *Leaving Equality Behind: New Directions in School Finance Reform*, 48 VAND. L. REV. 101, 103 (1995) ("The quality of the educational opportunities offered in the public schools of most American urban centers, and in many other underfinanced districts as well, remains shockingly poor.")).

²⁰ While this broad historical note has sought to provide an overview of historically racist law and policy, there remain many racist phenomena which have not been addressed, such as the violence perpetuated against Black people during the lynching epidemic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as well as the dangerous conditions and unpaid prison labor that disproportionately impact Black people today, through mass incarceration.



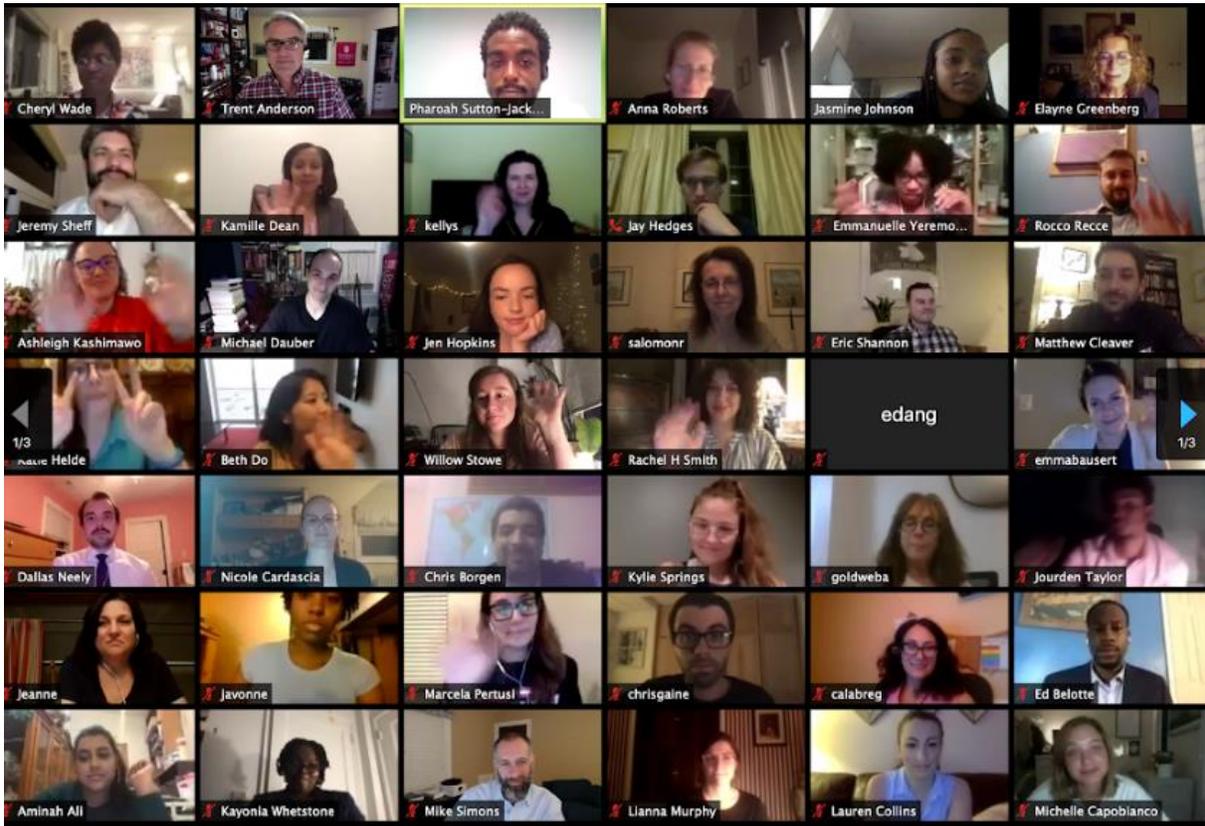
The Coalition for Social Justice's

Progress Report

on the

St. John's University – School of Law's

Anti-Racist Agenda



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INTRODUCTION

On June 4th, 2020, the Coalition for Social Justice (“CSJ”) made a call for action. We invited our peers to engage with us as we discussed effective, actionable ways to support the Black students at St. John’s Law and the overall Black community. At the end of our “Dialogue Day,” we put all participating parties on notice that they would be held accountable to the commitments they made. CSJ has no executive or supervisory authority over any of our peer student organizations. The law school administration has granted us no special mechanisms through which to evaluate the efforts of our peers. Nor do we intend to create one for our sole use and benefit. Our willingness and assertiveness in challenging our peers to do more is not derived from any perceived paternalistic status or powers. It stems simply from our own commitment to serve that role in what we believe to be a collective pursuit of transforming St. John’s University School of Law into an actively anti-racist institution.

In the full execution and adherence to that role, we are also obligated to hold ourselves accountable to our commitment. We aim to do that in this “Progress Report.” This report is not an evaluation of our peers’ efforts. Rather, it is an evaluation of our own efficacy in encouraging, fostering, and facilitating substantial anti-racist activities within our institution. We choose to measure our effectiveness qualitatively as opposed to quantitatively. We begin by reviewing our initial methodology, the hosting and facilitating of Dialogue Day and all proceeding preparations. Next, we detail our Moderator Workshop program, which was designed to address an area of concern we noted throughout the subsequent summer. We then fully reflect on all the student organizational anti-racist activity since June 4th. Our observations highlight the range of different forms and functions, as well as the diversity of targeted communities. Additionally, we provide constructive feedback on these events that are sourced not only from our own opinion but from our humble collection of survey data from the student body. This feedback is not meant to be a directive to any of the student organizations. Again, these observations are organized by the activities, not who was responsible for them. Therefore, this feedback is simply our attempt to provide data on these different types of activities, and their range of methodologies, so that all student organizations – including CSJ – who may seek to organize similar initiatives, are more informed of what is effective, as well as the areas for improvement.

At the conclusion of this Progress Report we decline to make any declarative judgment on our progress thus far. Stimulating institutional evolution, particularly in the field of law and legal education, is an ambitious – albeit necessary – project. We recognize that passing declarative judgement on our progress after only a few months serves little to no internal or collaborative value. This omission should not be interpreted as an implicit reservation of such a judgement for a later date. Systemic racism has been entrenched in the culture of this country and the fabric of its institutions for centuries. We do not foresee any time in the near future where we shall be able to declare that St. John’s Law has been completely

cleansed of this ill. Nor will we likely ever be compelled to make a broad sweeping acknowledgment that “much work still needs to be done.” The mere existence and persistence of the Coalition for Social Justice itself is a recognition of and response to the fact that there is still much work to be done. However, if there is regression, or specific identifiable impediments to continued progress, expect to hear from us.

INITIAL METHODOLOGY

In the summer of 2020, CSJ members, like many others, observed the racial reckoning in this country with heavy hearts. We recognized the trauma, anxiety, and pain that our Black classmates must have been feeling. When the Black Law Students Association (“BLSA”) called for other student organizations to express their solidarity, we were encouraged by how many organizations did so expeditiously. In further effort to unify as a community, the administration suggested that we organize and host a Dialogue Day event, our signature semesterly program.

In the past, Dialogue Days have been held to raise awareness about an issue of social justice, provide information to deepen understanding, and create a space for reflective conversation. However, our approach to this Dialogue Day was shaped by the simple goal of providing support to our Black student community. After much deliberation with BLSA leadership and the former Director of Diversity and Inclusion Kamille Dean, we collectively decided that this Dialogue Day would not be focused on reflective conversation, but rather on creating tangible action. It was aptly titled, [“No More Talking...What Are We Going to Do.”](#)

In relaying this intention to Dean Michael Simons and Vice Dean Sarah Kelly, we expressed that our intent with regards to Dialogue Day was not to simply acknowledge and condemn institutional racism. Our Black peers and colleagues wanted, needed, and deserved more than that in order to feel supported and valued. Rather, we desired that Dialogue Day serve two clear purposes. First, that it be a declarative moment for our community; where we establish that our collective response to the recent tragedies was to commit to becoming an actively anti-racist institution. Second, that it be a space where we could facilitate the first actionable steps of that mission.

At that time, with the support of the administration and BLSA leadership, CSJ assumed a role akin to lead organizer with respect to the entire St. John’s Law community’s adoption of an anti-racist agenda. We thus viewed Dialogue Day less like an event and more like a committee meeting. The primary task of this committee meeting was to capitalize on the purported solidarity with the Black community, expressed by the majority of the student body, in a way that produced genuine, effective, and tangible advocacy and support. We were very intentional in our approach and the execution of this task and we believe it was very successful. Our event gathered 284 attendees who remained for most of a three-hour program. 25 of 32 student organizations were formally represented. The conversation was robust and fruitful. Each

organization presented 1-3 unique and narrowly tailored action items to pursue immediately. Many parties expressed that they left feeling activated and empowered. In a debrief with the BLSA executive board, several members expressed satisfaction with the operation of the event and felt encouraged by the overall sentiment. The administration has since informed us that the event set a precedent for our community. It was one of the most substantial gatherings of the law school community to directly address an issue of social justice. We outline our framework and strategic plan in the following sections.

REQUEST DIRECT OUTREACH TO ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS. In addition to a general invite to the law school community, we reached out to each of the organizations that extended their public support to BLSA. We asked them to send a representative or two to engage in formal organizational collaboration.

CLEARLY DEFINE OBJECTIVES. We sent all participating organizations a clear description of the event, outlining the agenda and objectives. Our stated goal was to “as a group, identify and evaluate various measures that range from conservative to radical, reach a consensus, and then make a commitment. A commitment that we will subsequently hold ourselves accountable to.”

CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES AND DEFINE EFFECTIVE ALLYSHIP FOR THEMSELVES. In our invitation to our fellow student organizations, it was a priority for us to assert that while Black voices are the ones that needed the space to be heard, the event would not be a lecture. We were not gathering to educate non-Black attendees on the operation, manifestation, and/or effects of racism. Dialogue Day was to be a planning session. Therefore, the expectation was that all attendees, especially those who were non-Black, would be vocal and contribute.

Too often the burden of resolving issues of social injustice is unfairly shifted to the most disadvantaged to not only highlight their own oppression, but also to educate others in how to solve those problems, problems they did not create. Thus, we were adamant that our peers come to the event prepared, seeking assistance and feedback, not instruction.

DEMAND TRANSPARENCY. Transparency creates trust, facilitates accountability, and fosters community building. Not only were organizations put on notice that they were expected to attend prepared, but also that they would each individually be called to present their plans to the entire forum.

SEEK GUIDANCE FROM ADVISORS, MENTORS, AND EDUCATORS. We recognize that part of our privilege and power as law students is our access to information and resources. We convened a panel of 12 faculty members and asked them to share their perspectives on two points. Our first prompt to the panel invited them to share their perspective on lawyers’ and law students’ roles and responsibilities in the fight against systemic oppression. Our second prompt encouraged our panelists to share their own experiences in challenging discrimination in the legal field. We asked them to share specific tools and resources, as well as challenges they have faced.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE. As the organization calling for action, we were the first to present action steps. Working with the BLSA Executive Board we put together 4 task forces to accumulate resources for both Black students and allies. A Mental Health task force put together a list of support resources specifically tailored for Black people. A Prosecution task force compiled a list of DA offices to call for cases of interest and brought attention to pending anti-racist legislation to support. A COVID-19 task force compiled a list of resources individuals could utilize to help communities of color grapple with the effects of the pandemic. The final task force was centered on Community Outreach. This group compiled resources to provide financial aid to Black communities, contact information for pro bono lawyers, and information on bail funds for protestors.

FACILITATE COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING. While facilitating the meeting, we made a point to highlight similarities and relevant connections between different organizations' proposals. In doing so, we encouraged groups to co-sponsor each other's events, pool resources, and share contacts. Additionally, groups offered feedback on each other's ideas to further them along in the planning process. Faculty and administrators also offered their support and resources where relevant.

KEEP RECORDS. Our discussion facilitators took copious notes of all proposals that were presented as well as all feedback.

DEMAND COMMITMENT. We explicitly informed our attendees that we would be drafting a document comprised of all the stated commitments. The expectation was then that all attending organizations would sign said document and formally commit to taking those actions.

PRIORITIZE ACCOUNTABILITY. All throughout the night and heavily at the conclusion of the event, we stressed that this would not be a one-off. We informed our audience that we fully planned to convene all organizations on a recurring basis to hold each other publicly accountable to the commitments we had made.

SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM. As we debriefed Dialogue Day, we decided the next task was to determine the most effective way to sustain momentum and ensure follow-through. It was imperative that Dialogue Day be the start of a movement and not a mere moment. For this to happen the shift in student organizational culture and focus on anti-racism must be institutionalized. Ultimately, this was accomplished by formalizing and codifying the commitments made at Dialogue Day within a contract.

The contract, formally titled "St. John's University School of Law Student Organization Commitment to Racial Justice and Solidarity with Marginalized Communities," was drafted by a committee comprised of our Executive Board members, and its terms negotiated with other organizations by our President, Pharoah Sutton-Jackson. The ratification period lasted 10 days. 30 of 32 student organizations signed onto the document representing that, at least nominally, a broad consensus of our

student leaders would institutionalize an anti-racist agenda into their organizational scope. We feel this is most signified by the universal adoption of the intent to add a Diversity and Inclusion officer (or something akin) to each organization's Executive Board.

In said contract, not only did we formalize each organization's commitments, we also formalized a system of accountability. In collaboration with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Student Bar Association (SBA D&I), we created a system where student organizations are required to report to the committee on a recurring basis each semester detailing their diversity and inclusion activities. Furthermore, there will be a formal accountability meeting at the end of each semester where organizations will detail what they have accomplished in that semester and what they plan to accomplish the next semester. Participation and fulfillment of these requirements will be factored into how the D&I Committee allocates its discretionary funds. Thus, this system of accountability involves both a nominal and pecuniary interest as incentive.

The next step in sustaining the momentum was to establish continuous lines of communication and collaboration. The SBA D&I Committee's establishment of the St. John's Law Affinity Group Alliance ("AGA") helped to serve this purpose. Formal membership in the alliance is restricted to affinity groups, but attendance is open to all student organizations. As a result, this forum has provided a space for us to reconvene with all organizations and follow up. On August 21st, we invited all organizations from Dialogue Day to an AGA meeting and asked them to report on their progress from the summer and outline their plans for the semester.

Up to that point we had either co-sponsored or sent representation from our Executive Board to every D&I event that summer. We remained highly consistent in that practice as the semester began. Thus, at that AGA meeting, CSJ began the formal process of reflecting on our progress as a community. Additionally, we began eliciting survey feedback from the student body at that time as well.



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IMPROVING AS WE GO

A common thread in the feedback we received was a reference to a need for improvement in the management of space and discourse. In anti-racist work, imbalances in power dynamics can be created. Those who involve themselves in the collective pursuit of equality are not immune to losing sight of their privilege. In response, we instituted two new organizational practices. As an organization we have adopted the practice of maintaining a “diverse panel or speaker” requirement as a pre-requisite for our co-sponsorship of any events. Diversity can take many shapes and forms, and it can be contextual, so we will make a case-by-case determination rather than a bright-line or rigid rule. We believe that this approach will best serve our aims. Additionally, we encourage student organizations to maintain a diversity requirement as well. Through our representation initiative, we seek to ensure that we include traditionally marginalized people in our discourse. Furthermore, we decided to create a Moderator Workshop that we will host once a semester. We highly encourage attending these sessions to anyone who expresses interest in facilitating conversations as a member of CSJ, especially during our Dialogue Day events. We provide a brief synopsis of the program in the following sections.

PROVIDING CONTEXT. To start a Moderator Workshop, we impress upon our audience the importance of the skills that we seek to develop during the hour-long program. Having the tools to navigate tough conversations about white supremacy, or any form of systemic oppression, is an important skill we need to foster as anti-racist advocates. This workshop emphasizes two important functions of the moderator (or facilitator), “Preparing to be a Facilitator” and “Managing the Conversation.” Each section of the workshop featured an interactive activity, “Create a Game Plan” and “Mock Conversation,” respectively.

PREPARING TO BE A FACILITATOR. Preparation is key for a moderator. We encourage attendees of our workshops to understand their role in the conversation and the responsibilities that come with that role. Facilitators are responsible for ensuring that audience members are engaged. When moderating, there must be a healthy balance between keeping the conversation flowing and avoiding lengthy tangents. This may require slowing panelists down or giving brief summaries of what has been said.

Once a moderator understands their role, they must learn the panelists and audience. Moderators should always perform or seek background research on their panelists. At the very least, moderators should know how to correctly say names and be aware of preferred pronouns. The moderator should also understand who their audience is and how big their audience is. The way an audience receives information depends on a host of factors such as demographics and environment. While it is important to keep this in mind, it is also important to avoid making assumptions based on your own perceptions.

Proper preparation also includes informing participants of the purpose of the conversation, how the participants can help achieve that purpose, and what the goals are beyond that conversation. The objective is for everyone involved, from moderators to participants, to be on the same page and working towards shared interests. These conversations take time and effort to organize and facilitate. Moderators can achieve the greatest result for their efforts by keeping everyone focused on the task at hand.

CREATE A GAME PLAN. To practice this, workshop attendees are invited to participate in a Create a Game Plan activity. Attendees choose from a list of topics and prepare a mock game plan for a hypothetical panel or group discussion on that topic. This game plan should address all the aspects of preparation that have been discussed. They should plan for who might attend, what type of panelists they might seek, and how they specifically may want to frame the conversation.

MANAGING THE CONVERSATION. The focus of the workshop then shifts to managing the conversation. We suggest a few baseline tools that should be available to every facilitator or moderator. One of the most essential tools is Active Listening. Active listening shows the speaker that you are paying attention. Active listening conveys respect for the speaker, interest in the topic they are speaking on, and encouragement for the speaker to continue what they are doing. Active listening tools not only help the speaker, but also the audience, as the facilitator gives both the panelists and audience time to pinpoint the key ideas and digest the material.

Anticipatory tools are another set of valuable tools that stem from the moderator's preparation. Anticipatory tools ensure that the conversation is efficient and poignant. The moderator can prepare the panelists and the audience by setting guidelines and establishing procedure. The Coalition for Social Justice, for example, has crafted our own Universal Discussion Guidelines, which are available [online](#). We highly suggest highlighting to panelists that discourse space traditionally has not been shared equally, which is something moderators must avoid. Discourse spaces tend to be controlled by the dominant demographic, typically able bodied cis-het white men. This does not mean that members of traditionally dominant demographics have no place in these conversations, but rather that they should keep this in mind and actively check themselves. Anticipatory tools are a strategic way to factor airtime equity into a conversation beforehand so that moderators can avoid disruptive confrontations with panelists and contributors.

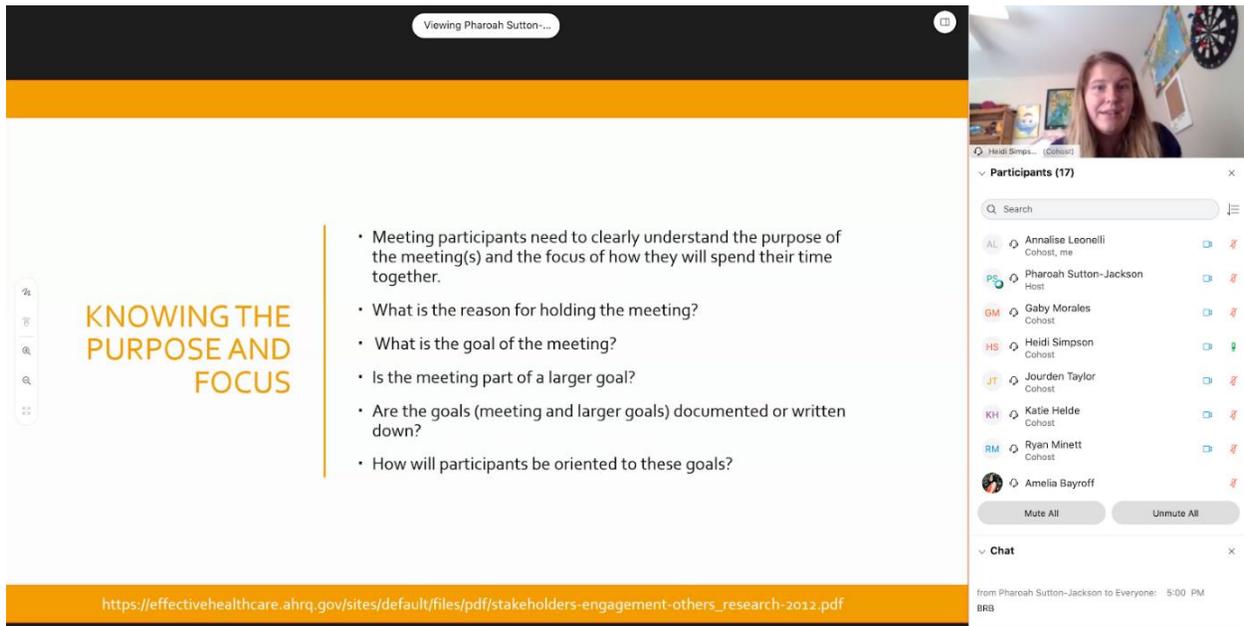
Reactionary tools, in contrast, are a set of practices facilitators can use to keep a conversation on course as it progresses. These tools include reading body language. If a moderator notices a problem such as one person dominating the discussion, or that other panelists would like to contribute but are having trouble getting involved, the moderator should bring people in. Asking more directed questions towards the panelists or just asking for their unique perspective on an issue is a good way to shift the conversation without being abrasive. Respectful transitions like this help show that, while the input and opinions of the

more talkative panelists are still valued, we as a group would benefit from more participation from other panelists as well.

Sometimes, the conversation does not proceed smoothly. When that happens, the moderator or the participants can use another helpful tool; a Repair. Moderators can do so by acknowledging someone was cut off and inviting them to share. For participants, this means checking yourself as something happens. The sooner a Repair happens after an incident, the better for everyone. Moderators often may need to utilize a Repair for their own actions as a way of returning to a participant that they previously moved away from.

Finally, an effective way to end a conversation is to debrief. Moderators should save enough time to review some main takeaways and highlight the key themes from the discussion. Panelists should be allowed time to make closing remarks and to clear up anything they felt was ambiguous or not explained fully. We always recommend that a moderator take the time to thank everyone involved for their participation and the panelists' and participants' courage to talk about these topics. These are not easy conversations, especially for those whom these issues have been the source of deep trauma. It is important to acknowledge that. Panels are more than just informational, they provide an opportunity to connect panelists, organizers, and the audience to each other. The more amicable the entire event is, the better.

MOCK CONVERSATION. Next, using one of the topics from the Create a Game Plan activity earlier in the workshop, we ask one of the participants from the audience to volunteer to practice serving as a moderator. The presenters of the moderator workshop play the role of panelist. During this event, the mock panelists are intentionally difficult to simulate a challenging conversation or environment. This is just practice, especially as the chosen moderator has at most five minutes to prepare for moderating, and typically has absolutely no background on the panelists, who will be improvising. Nonetheless, it is good to see some of these tools in action as it helps participants visualize and experience how these tools will be used. After a few minutes of this mock conversation, the presenters of the workshop take time to provide constructive feedback.



Viewing Pharoah Sutton...

KNOWING THE PURPOSE AND FOCUS

- Meeting participants need to clearly understand the purpose of the meeting(s) and the focus of how they will spend their time together.
- What is the reason for holding the meeting?
- What is the goal of the meeting?
- Is the meeting part of a larger goal?
- Are the goals (meeting and larger goals) documented or written down?
- How will participants be oriented to these goals?

Participants (17)

- AL Annalise Leonelli Cohost, me
- PS Pharoah Sutton-Jackson Host
- GM Gaby Morales Cohost
- HS Heidi Simpson Cohost
- JT Jourden Taylor Cohost
- KH Katie Helde Cohost
- RM Ryan Minnett Cohost
- Amelia Bayroff

Chat

from Pharoah Sutton-Jackson to Everyone: 5:00 PM
BRB

https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/stakeholders-engagement-others_research-2012.pdf

“These are not easy conversations, especially for those whom these issues have been the source of deep trauma. It is important to acknowledge that. Panels are more than just informational, they provide an opportunity to connect panelists, organizers, and the audience to each other.”

PROGRESS REPORT

As a result of Dialogue Day, the St. John's Law summer calendar filled up with events focused on anti-racism. There were several panels with topics that ranged from St. John's Law alumni offering advice to students, to discussions of redlining and how systemic racism is perpetuated in housing. Other topics included the procedural challenges in achieving police accountability. In addition to panels, other events offered more practical help, such as the series on how to approach tough conversation topics surrounding race and racism. There was also a training for law students looking to become legal observers, which is just one of many ways that students can use their legal knowledge and connections in the service of protestors. Additionally, there were also anti-racist events concerning the arts such as a film screening of "Happy Birthday, Marsha!" and an ongoing student book club that shifted its focus to promoting Black authors.

As we fight for a better world free of systemic racism and bigotry, we recognize these problems are not solved overnight. Embracing anti-racism and becoming anti-racist requires more than just flipping a figurative switch. It takes time, patience, humility, and assistance. This process can be rough, embarrassing, and even painful. But for those individuals truly working to become anti-racist the alternative of complacency and tacit acceptance of this system are no longer options. For this movement to mature into substantial progress we must (1) hold ourselves and each other accountable; (2) remain open to criticism; and (3) persevere through adversity. We now offer reflections on this summer's events with the goal of replicating the good and amending the bad.

As the summer concluded, we asked organizations, their members, and event participants for their voluntary input on what was effective and how these events could be improved. While there is room for improvement in how we evaluated these events, the feedback is still valuable. We have broken this section down into a few categories based on the input we received; Panelists, Audience Participation, Support from the School, and Organizers.

PANELISTS. Participants were impressed with the panelists that spoke at the virtual events this summer. They were described as knowledgeable, diverse in background, and enthusiastic at the opportunity to share with new audiences. Panelists were not just lawyers, so they offered different perspectives, perspectives we as law students and lawyers must not ignore. Various organizations brought in public interest workers, policy advocates, community leaders, judges, and academics. There were very few areas of improvement, however they still presented themselves. Participants noticed that certain panelists – typically white men – spoke more often than the other panelists. Participants were also hoping that panelists would provide more recommendations on how to follow-up and/or participate in current initiatives related to the topic.

AUDIENCE. Participants were impressed with the audience size that certain events drew both from the student body and from law school faculty. Participants were also impressed with some organizations'

use of breakout groups during the events, where audience members could learn from each other in a more intimate setting. Participants were eager to have more interaction with the panelists, especially the alumni who offer such a unique and tailored perspective to current students. On the other end of the spectrum, some participants hoped for more audience participation during certain panels and events. The general feeling expressed by participants was that beyond learning about these subjects, they wanted more opportunity for engagement, so that virtual events do not become just another virtual lecture to attend.

SUPPORT FROM THE SCHOOL. Organizers praised certain professors for their willingness to participate. The school's staff and faculty have been helpful with technology in setting up and facilitating virtual events and tapping their networks to pull panelists. The school's marketing department has also received both praise and some criticism for their promotion of events. Marketing has been helpful with scheduling and making sure there is little to no overlap in events. One of the comments we received under the "what needs improvement" prompt was "social media marketing and navigating public response to sensitive topics." We are not sure exactly what incident or event this is referring to and we are not certain of the sentiment. However, the comment evoked two important considerations. First, when marketing anti-racist events and activities, organizations need to exercise care in the language and images that are used. Many of these topics and discussions are trauma-inducing and while it is important to address them, the primary goal is to support communities. Carelessness in messaging is contrary to that purpose. Second, student organizations and the administration need to command their platforms and the spaces they create – virtual or otherwise – and maintain an anti-racist environment. There should be vigilant monitoring of the engagement and discourse to make sure that it is always respectful.

ORGANIZERS. Participants in the survey have been happy with the topics picked by the organizers and with the panelists invited in. Many of the topics chosen are relevant to the disciplines taught during first-year law school curriculums. Students were appreciative of the connections to anti-racism made from that material. Participants were also impressed with the event organizers who expressed concrete and actionable goals in conjunction with the generally informative events. The biggest issue noted by participants was with the moderating. While organizers have been committed and energetic when it comes to organizing and hosting these events, the moderating has left room for improvement. For example, in one event there were three panelists, a white man and two Black women. Throughout the event, the white man spoke at least two-thirds of the time. This cannot continue. If we are to take on diverse topics and discuss the problems faced by marginalized communities, we cannot perpetuate white supremacy while doing this. White men are notorious for dominating speaking time, intentionally or not. If we are to end white supremacy and the patriarchy, we must do our utmost not to perpetuate it in our events and platforms. This feedback is consistent for both panelists and moderators and it is important to acknowledge that it is a distinct issue for both parties. Panelists who intentionally appropriate our spaces should not be

invited back, and to the best of our knowledge should be screened out of our selection processes. Conversely, it is the moderator's role to maintain airtime equity as panelists may become expository rather innocuously.

CONCLUSION

From this point on, the Coalition for Social Justice removes itself from any continuous process of peer evaluation. The accountability system that we have helped to establish within the SBA D&I framework shall bear that burden. Our role moving forward will be that of a facilitator and source of reliable information. Where we observe areas of improvement in our community, we will continue to provide solution-based responses, much like we did with the Moderator Workshop. When it comes to guarding against complacency, we strive to lead by example. The use of an evaluative survey is a practice we have permanently adopted with respect to our own programming and events. We encourage our peers to engage their memberships in similarly reflective ways. Engaging with individuals who are passionate about anti-racist work but who are not necessarily in positions of student leadership is vital. The [CSJ independent website](#) was created largely to provide a platform for those voices. [It was also created so that we can continue to archive our own evolution, as we have done in this report.](#) We are determined to ensure that our successors in leadership are well-informed and well-prepared. We also hope that our peers at other law schools use our organization, our platform and our documented reflections as resources as well.



The Coalition for Social Justice's

St. John's University – School of Law's

Anti-Racist Agenda

Prospectus

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the Progress Report reflected on the Summer of 2020, this Prospectus looks forward at the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond. Our community's anti-racist programming over the summer was the result of an urgency produced by the moment. Moving forward, such programming shall be the product of deliberate intention and formalized commitment.

With the adoption of the "ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW STUDENT ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY WITH MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES," student organizations in our community will continuously lead ongoing initiatives and concrete actions for change as a function of our collective and individual operation. While we seek the inclusion and empowerment of all marginalized and oppressed peoples, the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor have demonstrated an immense need to specifically combat racial injustice.

When, On June 4th, almost three hundred members of our law school community came together to discuss the school's role in combatting racial injustice, all student organizations analyzed the nuanced ways in which the legal system perpetuates racism. In doing so, it became very clear that incorporating anti-racist programming on a consistent basis did not require any overt broadening of their scope. There are relevant, productive, and beneficial conversations about race to be had within all sub-fields of the law, and amongst all communities in the law school. Thus, the adoption of an anti-racist agenda as a school, specifically at the student level, does not require substantive innovation or any esoteric extracurricular activities. Rather, what is needed is a re-direction of resources and persistent commitment and emphasis.

In the Progress Report we reflected on the efficacy of our efforts to foster anti-racist activity. In this document we seek to describe how we as an educational community have begun the process of institutionalizing these activities; forging anti-racism as an aspect of our identity. Therefore, we present our community's prospective anti-racist activity categorized by organizational capacity and composition. We hope that our peers at other law schools, who may not have the same set of organizations, but otherwise have similar capacities and compositions, may emulate and improve on such activities.

ANTI-RACISM AT ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

In pursuit of a robust anti-racist agenda, the Coalition for Social Justice ("CSJ) encourages substantive acts which work toward racial justice, such as hosting events and volunteer efforts that directly examine racial injustice. We also encourage procedural standards. When we facilitated a school-wide call to action, numerous student organizations and affinity groups answered that call in both ways.

INTERNAL EVENTS. School organizations have committed to addressing racism in their particular legal disciplines and industries, such as the Corporate and Securities Law Society (CSLS), which shall host at least one event per year to discuss racism and the lack of diversity within the field of Corporate and Securities Law. Those events shall, at least in part, teach students how to directly speak out against racism in corporate environments. The Entertainment, Arts, and Sports Law Society (EASL) has created a document highlighting Black media, including movies, books, TV shows, and other forms of media. This document shall be updated at least once per year and shared with all incoming and current students of St. John's University School of Law. The Healthcare Law Society (HLS) shall host events about the racial disparities in U.S. healthcare. The Intellectual Property Law Society (IPLS) shall host at least one event per year relating to issues such as developing relationships between intellectual property and protesters, challenging racist trademarks, identifying cultural appropriation and racial insensitivity within Intellectual Property, and promoting Internet safety for protesters. The International Law Society Association (ILSA) shall more directly examine anti-racism in an international context. The National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA) shall each year sponsor events about the economic injustices that impact people of color in the marketplace. The Real Property Law Society (RPLS) and the Mattone Institute have committed to raising awareness about racial discrimination in housing and Fair Housing Legislation.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH. School organizations shall also serve the Black community directly, such as the American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI), which shall work to support Black Businesses. The Criminal Law Society (CRS) shall engage in community outreach efforts to educate New York City youth about their rights. NACA shall compile a set of resources on possible avenues for combatting or reporting instances of racial discrimination against consumers, which shall be shared with the entire student body and updated periodically. The National Lawyers Guild, St. John's University School of Law Chapter (NLG) shall increase mental health resources and awareness for students of color. OUTLAWS & Allies (OUTLAWS) shall fundraise for organizations that support Black Trans Women. The South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA) shall fundraise for at least one racial justice organization each year and require Executive Board members to contribute volunteer hours or pro bono work that supports the Black community.

PUBLICATIONS. The publications of St. John's University School of Law shall more expressly address racism and promote racial diversity; the Forum newspaper, for example, shall focus on featuring racially diverse student voices and publishing articles written by students of color. The Journals of St. John's

Law will add a diversity component into their writing competition criteria. The St. John's University School of Law Review (Law Review) shall mentor students who author publications on racial justice topics. Law Review shall also raise awareness of and promote the use of Black authored legal sources. The Journal of Civil Rights and Economic Development (JCRED) shall devote a portion of the Perspectives in Justice course to discussing racial justice, and it shall also have a call for papers that explicitly address the intersections of race and class. Additionally, JCRED shall create a Short Reads blog, wherein students may discuss any unpublished student notes about race. The Labor Relations and Employment Law Society (LRELS) shall spotlight racial justice topics and racial justice organizations on their blog. The New York International Law Review (NYILR) shall create open discussion blog posts about racism in an international context.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE. School organizations that address the criminal justice system with particularity shall more directly address systemic racism. For instance, The Frank S. Polestino Trial Advocacy Institute (PTAI) shall plan programming dedicated to exploring prosecutorial discretion in the justice-seeking model. The Public Interest Center and Public Interest Law Student Association (PIC & PILSA) have committed to including racial justice issues within Pro Bono Week events. Additionally, PIC & PILSA started their annual 2020 programing, inspired by the CSJ's call to action, with a discussion about racist policing and the role of progressive prosecution in combatting racist policing. The Transforming Justice Initiative (TJI) shall address criminal justice reform, which will call attention to the systemic inequalities that exist within the structure of prisons. Further, TJI purports to serve as an organization that encourages law students to reimagine our justice system through alternatives to incarceration.

AFFINITY GROUPS. Student affinity groups have committed to addressing anti-Black racism within their communities. This includes the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association (APALSA), the South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA), and the Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA), who will examine the manifestations and impacts of anti-Black racism within Asian and Latinx communities, respectively.

Student affinity groups have also committed to becoming more intersectional and racially aware in their discourse and event planning, such as the Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA), which shall encourage their members to stand in solidarity with the Black community and seek to foster inter-faith engagement. OUTLAWS will focus on the racial intersections within the LGBTQ+ community in its events planning, such as the particular oppression that Black Trans Women face. The Women's Law Society (WLS) shall, in its book club program, include at least three books by Black authors each year, and at least one book that will examine the subject of systemic racism. The Multilingual Legal Advocates (MLA) shall commit to working with non-profits who aid Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities and raise awareness of the difficulties that non-native-English-speaking Black and Indigenous People of Color face within the legal system. There has also been the creation of a new group for First Generation

Law students, which will examine how anti-Black racism can compound the challenges faced by first generation law students.

CONCLUSION

These are commitments that the student organizations of St. John's University School of Law have made, in response to the ongoing crisis of systemic racism in our country. Through this document, and in our future endeavors, CSJ calls on the student organizations of St. John's University School of Law to intentionally examine and combat systemic racism. Many student organizations of St. John's University School of Law have already hosted events and launched initiatives to examine anti-Black racism and to promote racial justice since CSJ hosted the Dialogue Day event on June 4th, 2020.

The Coalition for Social Justice believes that we can work together and hold each other accountable to repair the racial harms, discrepancies, and inequities of our justice system. We are grateful to our fellow students and to members of the law school community who have committed to answering this call to action for racial justice. We look forward to seeing these plans come to fruition.



The St. John's University School of Law

Law Student Leadership

Commitment to

Diversity and Inclusion Contract

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
STUDENT ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT TO RACIAL JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY WITH
MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

THIS STUDENT ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT ("COMMITMENT") is made this day of August 28, 2020 ("Effective Date"), by and between the various represented and undersigned St. John's University School of Law Student Organizations ("STUDENT ORGS") at the forum of the St. John's University School of Law Affinity Group Alliance ("AGA").

I. THE AGREEMENT

In light of the killing of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police and the pattern of police violence against Black communities;

Recognizing the verbal and written commitments to solidarity with BLSA and the Black community made during the "*No More Talking, What are we Going to do?*" event on June 4, 2020 ("*Dialogue Day*");

And understanding that there are unique actions each student organization can take as a result of our individual areas of expertise to highlight and combat anti-Black racism and police brutality,

We, the STUDENT ORGS, resolve to make the following changes to our community:

1. The STUDENT ORGS shall acknowledge and challenge anti-Black racism in their fields.
2. The STUDENT ORGS understand the importance of diversity and inclusion and shall consider diversity as a criterion for speakers when planning events.
3. The STUDENT ORGS shall host at least one event or activity per year that addresses anti-Black racism in their field.
4. The STUDENT ORGS shall have an Executive Board position or committee dedicated to diversity and inclusion.
5. The STUDENT ORGS shall communicate to their incoming E-board each year the importance of maintaining the commitments made in this document.
6. The STUDENT ORGS acknowledge that this contract and the individual commitments made in Section II represent a minimum commitment to solidarity with the Black community and anti-racist work. For this reason, each organization shall, in the years following the 2020-2021 school year, continue to work to improve and increase its commitment to anti-racism.

We, the STUDENT ORGS, understand the magnitude of the COMMITMENT, and pledge to hold ourselves accountable for these commitments.

The STUDENT ORGS also agree to be held accountable to the COMMITMENT by the mechanisms and measures described in Appendix A.

II. INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS

Individual Organizations made the following individual commitments at Dialogue Day and agree to renew these commitments every academic year, beginning with the 2020 – 2021 academic year:

1. **ABI** shall undertake at least one volunteer or community service activity per year which benefits the underserved communities near St. John's University School of Law. ABI shall also, at least once per year, engage in activities that support Black businesses.
2. **APALSA** shall hold a panel discussing the model minority myth and anti-Blackness in the Asian community.
3. The **CDOLR** shall commit to creating an Executive Board position for a Director or Editor for Diversity and Inclusion; to helping raise awareness of federal and state legislative reform initiatives; to co-sponsoring events dedicated to raising awareness about issues of racism and discrimination throughout the legal field; to participating in movements with other student organizations to see that St. John's implements policies that reflect evolving social change; and to asking future guest speakers to discuss issues of racism and discrimination in commercial law and the legal profession, their own experiences with these issues, and the ways these problems can be solved
4. The **Children's Rights Society** shall incorporate at least one event or discussion per year that addresses racism as it relates to children in some aspect of the law.
5. The **Corporate and Securities Law Society** shall host at least one event per year that discusses racism and the lack of diversity within the field of Corporate and Securities Law. These events shall, at least in part, teach students how to discuss racism in corporate environments, and teach students how to directly speak out against racism in corporate environments.
6. The **Criminal Law Society** shall engage in community outreach efforts to educate New York City youth about their rights. The Criminal Law Society shall also host at least one event per semester discussing issues of racial inequality within the criminal justice system
7. **EASL** shall create a document highlighting Black media, including movies, books, TV shows, and other forms of media. This document shall be updated at least once per year and shared with all incoming and current students of St. John's University School of Law.
8. The **Federalist Society** shall host or co-sponsor, at least once per year, an event discussing legal issues that negatively impact Black communities, including, but not limited to, qualified immunity and police unions.
9. **The Forum** shall platform more diverse student voices and publish each year articles written by diverse students.
10. The **Historical Society** shall compile a list of resources on the legal background of racial injustice in New York courts, and shall make this resource available to all St. John's University School of Law students.
11. **HLS** shall hold a panel dedicated to healthcare disparities in the US each year. Included in that panel discussion will be information/comparison regarding the diversity education and training that takes place for students and professionals in the medical field- where it's lacking and what we can learn and how to bring that information into the legal field.
12. **ILSA** shall, every year, co-sponsor at least one event with BLSA regarding anti-racism in an international context. Further, ILSA shall host at least one event discussing systemic racism.

13. **IPLS** shall host at least one event per year relating to the role of Intellectual Property Law in the movement for racial justice. These events shall discuss topics including but not limited to the developing relationships between intellectual property and protesters, challenging racist trademarks, identifying cultural appropriation and insensitivity in Intellectual Property, and promoting internet safety for protesters.
14. **JCRED** shall devote a portion of the Perspectives in Justice course to discussing racial justice. JCRED shall also have a call for papers that explicitly addresses the intersections of race and class. JCRED shall create a Short Reads blog, wherein students may discuss any unpublished student notes about race or adapt any academically researched paper into a blog post discussing how the issue addressed by the paper impacts race and social justice.
15. **JLSA** shall add a diversity clause to its by-laws to ensure future e-boards recognize the importance of supporting anti-racism in our community and to encourage members of our student association to stand in solidarity with the Black community. Annually, the e-board will review this language for needed updates. Additionally, during the 2020-21 school year, JLSA shall hold an event discussing the history of the Jewish community's work with the Black community to further civil rights.
16. **LALSA** shall expand its Street Law Program and create a partnership with the Puerto Rican Bar Association to represent people of color in all New York court systems. LALSA shall also hold an annual discussion of anti-Black racism in the Latinx community.
17. **Law Review** shall mentor students who author publications on racial justice topics. Additionally, Law Review will utilize their online platform, *The Commentary*, to publish pieces about criminal justice, policing & systemic racism. Law Review shall also raise awareness of and promote the use of Black authored legal sources. Finally, Law Review shall include a diversity criterion in its writing competition assessments.
18. **LRELS** shall spotlight work by students and faculty on racial justice topics and racial justice organizations on their blog.
19. **MLA** shall commit themselves to working with non-profits who aid BIPOC communities and raise awareness of the difficulties non-native English speaking BIPOC face within the legal system.
20. **Moot Court** shall create an E-Board position dedicated to facilitating outreach efforts in underserved communities of color.
21. **NLG** shall, at least once per year, host legal observer trainings for St. John's University School of Law students. NLG shall increase mental health resources and awareness for students of color at St. John's University School of Law.
22. **NYILR** shall co-sponsor at least one event with BLSA regarding anti-racism in an international context. In addition, NYILR shall create blog posts, wherein students may discuss any topics relating to racism in an international context.
23. **OUTLAWs** shall highlight intersectional identities among their members and the LGBTQIA+ community, including Black Trans Women, and pledges to, each year, fundraise for organizations that support Black Trans Women.
24. **PILC & PILSA** shall place racial justice at the forefront of our initiatives and event series. Beyond this year, PIC & PILSA will actively work to further incorporate racial justice into the intersectional legal topics that we explore during Pro Bono Week and volunteer initiatives. PIC & PILSA commits to

featuring a racial justice event during Pro Bono Week for each coming year. PIC & PILSA also commit to holding one panel event each year pertaining to racial disparities and harms within the justice system. PILSA also commits to adding a Diversity and Inclusion position on their Executive Board; this new position will be within PILSA's organization but will carry out responsibilities for PIC as well.

25. **PTAI** shall establish a recurring committee to promote outreach to communities of color, both at St. John's and beyond, as well as plan programming dedicated to exploring prosecutorial discretion in the justice seeking model.
26. **RPLS** shall, in partnership with the Mattone Institute, host at least one panel per year discussing racial discrimination issues in housing.
27. **SALSA** shall require each Executive Board member to complete a certain number of hours of volunteer or pro bono work that supports the Black community. SALSA shall also host a seminar on anti-Black sentiments within the South Asian Community and fundraise for at least one racial justice organization each year.
28. **SBA** shall build a partnership with BLSA to create a stronger support system for Black students at St. John's University School of Law. The SBA shall also create and maintain an alliance made up of E-Board members from all the affinity groups, which shall meet once a month during each academic year.
29. Transforming Justice Initiative ("**TJI**") in its founding year commits to keeping racial justice firmly within their scope of events every year, however that may manifest, as we call attention to the systemic inequalities that exist within the structure of prisons and intend to establish an organization that encourages law students to reimagine our justice system through alternatives to incarceration."
30. The **Women's Law Society** shall, in its book club program, include at least three books by Black authors each year, and at least one book that deals with the subject of systemic racism.

III. TERM AND TERMINATION

This COMMITMENT shall be in effect from the Effective Date until it is amended, revoked, or replaced upon formal agreement of the St. John's University School of Law Affinity Group Alliance ("**AGA**").

IV. NOTICE

The STUDENT ORGS shall put all new and joining members on notice of this agreement and their individual commitments at the start of every academic year, beginning with the 2020 - 2021 academic year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto, through their duly authorized officers, have executed this COMMITMENT as of the Effective Date.

BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Jasmine Johnson

Position: President

Date: 8/21/2020

OUTLAWS AND ALLIES

Name: Paul Pastore

Position: President

Date: 8/24/2020

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Ellie Sheinwald

Position: Executive Director

Date: 08/24/2020

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL LAW REVIEW

Name: Gia Fernicola

Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 08/24/2020

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW SOCIETY

Name: Rocco Recce

Position: President

Date: 08/24/2020

LATIN AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Loredana Miranda

Position: Vice President

Date: 08/24/2020

ENTERTAINMENT, ART, AND SPORTS LAW SOCIETY

Name: Nicole Cardascia

Position: Co-President

Date: 8/26/2020

REAL PROPERTY LAW SOCIETY

Name: Brandon Auerbach, Heather Lewin

Position: President, Vice President

Date: 8/26/2020

JEWISH LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Ellie Sheinwald

Position: Co-President

Date: 8/26/2020

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NEW YORK COURTS

Name: Eva-Maria Ghelardi

Position: President

Date: 8/26/2020

CORPORATE AND SECURITIES LAW SOCIETY

Name: Tiffany Heravi and Kayla Mistretta

Position: Co-Presidents

Date: 08/26/2020

PUBLIC INTEREST CENTER

Name: Sierra Fischer

Position: Executive Director

Date: 8/28/20

HEALTH LAW SOCIETY

Name: Caoimhe Stafford

Position: President

Date: 8/28/20

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SOCIETY

Name: Tiffany Testa

Position: President

Date: 8/28/20

INTERNATIONAL LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Yalda Khwaja

Position: President

Date: 8/28/20

POLESTINO TRIAL ADVOCACY INSTITUTE (PTAI)

Name: Emma Bausert

Position: Executive Director

Date: 8/28/20

MOOT COURT

Name: Bradley Jennings

Position: Executive Director

Date: 8/28/20

JOURNAL OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Name: Ron Eniclerico

Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 8/28/20

WOMEN'S LAW SOCIETY

Name: Sam Gagnon

Position: Vice President

Date: 8/28/20

THE MULTILINGUAL LEGAL ADVOCATES

Name: Mouna Jaouad

Position: President

Date: 8/28/20

ST. JOHN'S LAW REVIEW

Name: Kimberly Capuder

Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 8/28/20

AMERICAN BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE LAW REVIEW

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Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 8/29/20

CRIMINAL LAW SOCIETY

Name: Michael S. Dauber

Position: President

Date: 8/29/20

**ST. JOHN'S CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL
LAWYERS GUILD**

Name: Jay Hedges

Position: President

Date: 8/31/20

**THE COMMERCIAL DIVISION ONLINE LAW
REPORT (CDOLR)**

Name: Michael S. Dauber

Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 8/29/20

**LABOR RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT LAW
SOCIETY**

Name: Elyssa Cislucis

Position: President

Date: 9/2/20

THE FORUM

Name: Michael S. Dauber

Position: Editor-in-Chief

Date: 8/29/20

TRANSFORMING JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Name: Gabriela Morales, Ridmila
Sudasinghe

Position: Co-Founders/Co-Presidents

Date: 9/2/20

SOUTH ASIAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Name: Aminah Ali

Position: President

Date: 8/30/20

**HUGH L. CAREY CENTER FOR DISPUTE
RESOLUTION**

Name: Rachel Harris

Position: Overall Coordinator

Date: 8/31/20

**ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LAW STUDENTS
ASSOCIATION**

Name: Eric Dang

Position: President

Date: 8/31/20

APPENDIX A
ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENFORCEMENT

Purpose.

This section will outline the system used to support and enforce the agreements made in the COMMITMENT. St. John's University School of Law and The STUDENT ORGS have made the commitment to create an anti-racist climate within the Law School. By committing to perform the promises made on Dialogue Day, organizations have also agreed to be held accountable for said promises. It is the purpose of this section to ensure real change for BIPOC individuals at St. John's University School of Law by supporting, guiding, and, when necessary, holding organizations accountable to their commitments.

General Process.

The SBA's Diversity and Inclusion Committee ("the D&I Committee") will maintain and oversee a Google Drive Account dedicated to housing each Organization's commitment progress. Organizations will be required to attend an Accountability Meeting at the end of each semester where they must present the results of their commitments to the D&I Committee. The D&I committee will take each organizations completion of these requirements into consideration when disbursing additional funding from the funds allocated to the D&I committee for the purpose of promoting diversity and inclusion at the law school. The D&I Committee always reserves discretion in the allocation of these additional funds.

Responsibilities.

- (a) Organizations must maintain and update a Google Sheet as a part of the larger Google Drive Account described above. Each organization's Google Sheet document must describe each commitment promised as well as progress related to each commitment. These Google Sheets will remain locked and only viewable by the organization and the D&I Committee

- (b) Organizations must submit to the D&I Committee by a date to be determined at the beginning of each semester a Mid-Semester Report outlining the organization's progress, issues, and questions related to its commitment(s).

- (c) Organizations must record all issues as they arise to be included in this Mid-Semester Report.

Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

In the case where an organization elects to implement the Diversity and Inclusion Officer (See Appendix B), this position will assume all responsibilities described above. Alternatively, where an organization declines the addition of a D&I Officer, the organization is still required to fulfill all of these responsibilities.

APPENDIX B
PROPOSAL FOR A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER

Purpose.

The implementation of this new position will support future progress and ensure that the progress already made is properly built upon by the following year's Executive Board. While the work that will be achieved this upcoming year will be remarkable, it will not effectuate the degree of change described in the COMMITMENT. Furthermore, it is likely that the results of this work will only become evident after years of sustained effort.

Proposal.

Coalition for Social Justice ("CSJ") formally proposes that all groups implement a new Executive Board position dedicated to Diversity and Inclusion. This Diversity and Inclusion Officer ("D&I Officer") would serve as the point of contact for all commitment progress updates related to creating an anti-racist climate. Upon adoption of this proposal, D&I Officers will assume positional accountability for all of the responsibilities described in the COMMITMENT. Additionally, all D&I Officers will be invited as default members of the AGA.

Benefits.

1. The changing of Executive Boards from year-to-year serves as one of the largest challenges to sustained movement. The implementation of a D&I Officer best ensures this continuation between academic years by associating information related to Diversity and Inclusion initiatives with one person, as opposed to multiple. This will make the transfer of this information much simpler.
2. Moreover, with no singular contact, responsibility for these commitments will be dispersed among the entire Executive Board making it easier to justify failures in performance.
3. This singular point of contact guarantees a constant focus on issues of Diversity and Inclusion within each organization.
4. Additionally, the issue of racial injustice is systemic in nature. Thus, the removal of antiquated systems and the implementation of new ones is necessary. As these new positions become interconnected with one another via the coordination of various events and initiatives, organizations become reliant upon each other in a way that effectively maintains a focus on Diversity and Inclusion helping to create a self-reinforcing system.
5. Finally, each organization will be required to present the results of its commitment(s) to the D&I Committee. Appointing an Executive Board position dedicated to Diversity and Inclusion will ensure that these presentations are made by a person consistently engaged in such initiatives. This results in stronger presentations and more complete feedback and assistance.

For the reasons described above, CSJ proposes the permanent implementation of a D&I Officer position to all present organizations.

APPENDIX C
MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

To: CSJ Action Plan Committee
From: Jourden Taylor
Date: August 20, 2020
Re: Accountability and Enforcement General Purpose

Leaving Dialogue Day, there was a sense that real change was on the horizon for St. John's Law. For the beneficiaries of this change this sense of optimism was accompanied by a feeling of skepticism.

In this moment, support for our Black brothers and sisters is at an all-time high, but for those within this community we understand that to many people this is just a moment. Similar to Covid-19, many people just want to return to the days where everything operated normally. Even given the vast protests, seeing "Black Lives Matter" decals on NBA courts, and the new Diversity statements released from huge corporations, Breonna Taylor's killers still walk free, yet to be held accountable for the death of our sister. Words no longer mean anything to us. Action does.

As a Black man, racial injustice has always stemmed from people not within this group, yet we are the ones asked to educate and resolve. We cannot expect oppressors to discover the meaning of anti-racism on their own nor can we continue asking our Black brothers and sisters to be the sole teachers of their oppression. Instead, we must create a vehicle that helps guide these organizations along this process. This is the purpose of this contract.

This vehicle will contextualize this system of accountability with our institution's broader goal of creating an anti-racist Climate. Moving forward there will be a group of organizations that fail in their pursuit due to the real-life challenges of what they are being asked to do. These organizations will need support and structure, otherwise they will give up. On the other side there will be organizations that look forward to the first sign of resistance as this will serve as the end point for their participation. These organizations will need to be held accountable and their promises enforced, otherwise they will give up. Each organization will have different goals and will need to be supported differently. Thus, without a system intentionally designed to address these different types of issues we cannot serve our purpose in promoting social justice.

As I watched the video of George Floyd I was overcome with emotions. Emotions that spoke to many of my own experiences in today's America but more simply, it was difficult to comprehend how Derek Chauvin could sit on another man's neck for that length of time, as if he was an animal. We are not animals and our lives are worth no less than yours. So, as you return to your "normal" understand that without continued action from your community, my community's "normal" will consist of more George Floyds, Breonna Taylors and Ahmaud Arberys.

So, it is with these points in mind that CSJ presents this accountability contract.



<https://www.sjucesj.org/>

<https://twitter.com/SjuCsj>

<https://www.instagram.com/coalitionforsocialjusticesju/>

<https://www.stjohns.edu/law/jd-admissions/diversity-equity-inclusion>