

## **DEMAND THE EDUCATION YOU DESERVE!**

*“What we have come to find is that the most important thing one can learn from college is to enhance the lens through which we view the world. The new prescription for our metaphorical glasses cannot be found on the surface but only through a deeper gaze into what is observed and not observed. Look at what you will see and do not avert your eyes. Through discussions illuminate and gain vision. There are many invisible pieces operating the machine that dictates our reality, and it's time to make visible changes!” -Kashawn Holman*

Dear Students of Sociology,

You don't know us, but we love you. We love you when you feel that the world lacks the love that you deserve and we want you to consider the love that your education needs. Let this letter not only be an eye-opener but a heart opener as we have been where you are, struggling to gain a higher education and receiving that degree. All of us are rushing to get out of college, pursuing a major that's meant to prepare us for our chosen career. The idea is that college paves the way and prepares us for the real world. What we fail to consider is that we are already in the real world. As college students, our education is our responsibility.

With that responsibility, it is imperative that you do not only leave it in the hands of others but become more involved in the process so that we do not continue to foster ignorance and apathy, but practice self-love. This is a call for action and though the world can be unfair, it is up to you to refuse this reality. Professor Johnson challenged us to make these values meaningful: empowerment, mastery, and sharing. We responded by acknowledging that our education must come from within us. Ask yourself, “what does it mean to be fair?” Having access to an honest education is fair. Breaking apart old systems, beliefs and rules are fair. Putting yourself first and wanting nothing but the best for you, is fair. Take the power that you already hold into your hands and mold it into a goddamn kingdom.

This past semester we evolved as a class; we would briefly like to share with you what we've been up to in the hope that you might continue. We had the opportunity in our class to host four candidates for a faculty position in the Department of Africana Studies, specializing in Caribbean Studies. This experience sparked the hearts and minds of many in our class. How did we know so little about the Caribbean and its central role in radical thought? Moreover, how is this possible at Brooklyn College, home to the largest Caribbean diaspora in the world? We became concerned with why there was only one position being given to four worthy candidates. This was not just an academic matter; our ignorance was structural and demanded answers. We wrote a letter to express our concerns to department chairs, the Dean, and the Provost. We found that there are other underrepresented departments that suffer these circumstances that deprive all of

us. Ask yourselves, why is there no Asian Studies and why is Puerto Rican Latino Studies starved of us resources, just like Caribbean Studies? These are structural problem that our administrators must address.

We, with the encouragement of Professor Johnson, transformed our Contemporary Social Theory course. We asked the question: “Who are making the decisions that affect us?” Staying true to the value of empowerment and prioritizing the meaning of our education, we hosted the Provost, the Dean, and the chair of Africana Studies. In an hour long conversation that we are not sure we have fully grasped, we learned a valuable lesson: **Those in power will often deny the existence of their power!** We were also told that it is us, the students, who have the power. If we want younger, diverse, fully employed faculty, that can teach the subjects we care most about, we must demand it. Yet, we do not believe they want us to be those type of students—empowered.

Tackling the issue of an education that underserves us isn't to be taken lightly. We ask that you stand with us, grow with us solidarity. Use our experience this semester to move us forward in charting our future, which is also your future. Think outside the box and don't limit yourself. You have power in your education by questioning everything you see and hear. Fish for the information, don't wait for someone to tell you. You deserve more, so demand more. Our efforts are continuous, we are now passing the ball to you all. What will you demand now?

In love and solidarity

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