



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES OF ART + DESIGN

February 3, 2022

FROM: AICAD President and Executive Director Deborah Obalil
and Board Chair Elissa Tenny
SUBJECT: AICAD stands with HBCUs against violence and intimidation

Dear AICAD Community,

Shockingly, many historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have received bomb threats this year. According to multiple reports, over 20 HBCUs were subject to a bomb scare between January 31 and February 1, the first day in the month-long celebration of Black history and heritage. While none of these threats have proved credible, harm has nevertheless been caused that we must not fail to recognize.

The member institutions of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD), a non-profit consortium of the leading specialized arts and design schools in the US and Canada, agree with Spelman College President Mary Schmidt Campbell, who wrote clearly and directly, "These threats are despicable." We are deeply concerned about the consequences of this disruption and intimidation for today as well as tomorrow. Immediately, many schools needed to temporarily suspend classes, sweep their facilities for explosives, and extend internal and municipal resources to increase security. Left unopposed, this bullying may disrupt the sanctity of the educational environment, intimidate those who learn, work, and live at colleges, imperil the creation of knowledge, and endanger the incubation of emergent leaders for the long term. The perpetrators' bigoted targeting of Black institutions, people, and ideas is hateful and dangerously divisive; moreover, it is anathema to the vision AICAD member institutions have for higher education and the society everyone shares.

In 2019, we adopted the *AICAD Statement of Principles on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. This commitment acknowledges "that structural, systemic, historical, and intersecting forms of oppression require our ongoing attention, action, innovation, and leadership for positive change," that "thinking and making requires the full embrace of diversity, equity and inclusion," and our duty is to provide "learning environments and communities within which all can succeed." Achieving this goal requires us to oppose racist threats and protect opportunities for students, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups, to thrive. It's the right thing to do for today as well as tomorrow. As laboratories of creative expression and the built environment, arts and design schools know that a plurality of voices, variety of experiences, and full range of humanity makes for a richer culture, bolder ideas, and a better world.

Deborah Obalil
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