



ST. MARY ACADEMY Bay View

LIFT UP YOUR VOICES

New electives, workshops, promote equality and anti-racism.

What makes the anti-racism workshops being offered to freshmen this fall different from other courses?

They will be taught by students serving on the Culture and Identity Curriculum Committee, formed on Oct. 19, 2020, by students from the Culture Club, MOSAIC and Students of Color Alliance after the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of police on May 25, 2020.



Jadzia Jean '22 is one of the 15 students who will help lead workshops exploring topics such as gender, identity and race. An aspiring filmmaker who plans to double major in film and computer science, Jadzia says the workshops for freshmen are more far-reaching than sensitivity training or cultural appreciation classes.

“We are exploring topics such as racism and homophobia to help students come to terms with their identity and realize it’s okay to be who they are,” Jadzia says. “We want every

student to be represented and to know they are accepted and welcome at Bay View.”

Jadzia credits Bay View for being open to students’ needs and making the committee’s work matter. “The majority of our teachers want to work with us to achieve this goal of inclusivity,” she adds. “Most of them are already involved and working with us.”

Rewarding is how Jadzia describes the committee's work. "Our members are focused on outcomes and results," she adds. "I feel part of a close-knit team that's really ambitious and willing to push for inclusivity and the acceptance we all deserve."

In keeping with the Sisters of Mercy's mission to combat racism on all fronts, the committee is led by Claudia Traub, an anti-racist curriculum and teaching coach who has been an educator for over 25 years. Traub was introduced to Bay View by Sister Mary Reilly, the cofounder of Dorcas Place, McAuley Ministries and Sophia Academy, described by the Providence Journal as an "unwavering advocate for social justice and the empowerment of women and girls."

"I am inspired and moved by the students' articulate, critical thinking around issues of race, gender and class," Traub says. "They are the kind of youth advocates we could all learn from as they process their own discomfort with inequitable systems and lead their peers and teachers on the road to cultural competency and anti-racist thinking and action."

Drawing from multiple resources used to combat racism in the classroom and create equitable learning spaces, the committee is developing nine workshops that will be taught to freshmen. Student committee members will also present the learning modules to teachers this spring during a series of professional development workshops.

"What impresses me most about these students is their ability to be brave and call out what needs to be changed, and their willingness to do the hard work of creating learning modules," says Mary Ann Snider, vice principal for academics. "We're asking them to guide us to make Bay View a more fully supportive and inclusive environment and to influence the thinking of incoming generations of students."

Snider notes that thanks to input from committee members, two new electives will also be offered this fall for students in the Upper School: Global Resistance – Revolt for Equity and Freedom, and Multicultural Women's Voices in Contemporary Literature. Global Resistance will examine how individuals and groups have stood up to global oppression to ensure self-governance and justice. The literature course, an honors class, will explore the short stories, novels and poetry of contemporary female writers who identify as black, indigenous or women of color.

"It's so rewarding to see that we are all putting our minds toward something that is going to get done, and that we have the support of our teachers and administrators," Jadzia adds. "Our teachers want us to learn, to feel comfortable, to know we matter, and ensure that all our voices be heard."