

## Case Study 3: “BLM is Grounded on a Lie”

The leadership of a school is concerned about the politicization of issues related to racial inequity and Black Lives Matter (BLM). The community response earlier this spring and summer to communications offering support for BLM has been mixed. Older alums are worried the school is making a political statement rather than staying neutral, while other current students and even faculty and staff are pushing for more advocacy and action.

On a routine walkthrough of the campus and classrooms, the Dean of Faculty notices several BLM stickers or flags and sends out an email to the full faculty with a directive to take down the flags or stickers until further notice. In his directive, he quotes handbook policy that “teachers may engage in political discourse with students from a position of objectivity and neutrality.” Some of the faculty, White allies and BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color), are upset with the email and interpretation of policy, and decide to ignore the directive. Instead, a representative sends a letter to the head of school requesting a group meeting with him.

While the meeting is being scheduled, the students catch wind of the chatter among the adults on campus, and write to the head of school that they would like to attend this upcoming meeting. At the next weekly assembly, two juniors get up on stage and agree with the Dean of Faculty’s directive, saying “Black Lives Matter is a political organization whose published mission is the destruction of the nuclear family, all grounded on the lie that the U.S is rife with systemic racism.”

There’s immediate pandemonium in the auditorium as there are cries of agreement and boos from the other students, and the Dean of Faculty rushes to explain that he didn’t encourage those students, nor was what they shared his personal beliefs about BLM.

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- Given your current role, consider your response or action.
  - Are there gaps between the school’s espoused values, group norms, and shared values?
  - At which points in the story could a different approach have averted the predictable outcome?