

Sankofa Tzedek:

An exploration of community, solidarity, and justice



Image: A light blue and white drawing of a bird looking over its shoulder; the bird's head, wing, and tail form the Hebrew letters of Tzedek. The background is dark blue with a transparent overlay of a mural depicting a hand with protest signs radiating from it.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is Sankofa Tzedek?

A: We bring together a cohort of students on campus for a year of personal identity development, intergroup dialogue, intercultural learning, and social justice education that centers the experiences and histories of Black and Jewish communities. Through friendship-building; sustained dialogue on social identity, power and privilege, and activism; and an exploration of the histories of Black and Jewish communities, students will build transformational relationships; solidify a commitment to intercommunity solidarity for the purpose of ending racism, anti-Semitism, and all forms of oppression; and acquire skills for being effective dialogue leaders on campus.

Q: Why was this program created?

A: Black and Jewish communities, once seen as natural allies in various social movements, have faced increasing separation and tension in recent decades. Recent news headlines include questions about the role of Jewish social justice organizations in anti-racism work, disagreements about how Black leaders should respond to anti-Semitism, political debates about Palestine and Israel, and more. These public tensions tend to make invisible the voices of Black Jews and lead to increasing separation of Black and Jewish communities. On campus, we see--if not outright tension--few opportunities for meaningful connections among Black and Jewish student organizations and administrative programs.

Q: Who should join this cohort? Who will be facilitating?

A: The program is open to all undergraduate students. We are especially seeking students who are excited to engage with historical and current social justice movements, develop leadership skills, and build meaningful relationships.

Sankofa Tzedek is a collaboration between the Multicultural Affairs and the Kraft Center for Jewish Student Life. Staff from these two offices will serve as facilitators throughout the semester.

Q: Where will the cohort meet?

A: The cohort will meet virtually during the 2020-2021 academic year. The program concludes in April, but conditions permitting, there will be an optional opportunity for students to participate in an additional component: an immersive travel experience in early May.

Q: How often does the cohort meet?

A: The following meeting times will be required of accepted participants.

- Opening Retreat: Times TBD between Wednesday, November 11 and Friday, November 13
- December Program: Friday, December 4
- January - April Programs: Biweekly on Fridays
- Possible (optional) travel experience: early May, 2020

Typical Friday programs will take place for 2-3 hours and be held between 1pm and 4pm EDT. Programming will be scheduled to end at least an hour before the start of Shabbat.

Q: What does a typical Friday program entail?

A: The cohort might spend a Friday program engaged in dialogue about identity, privilege, culture, and values; meet with guest speakers; or learn leadership skills. We will also be looking into virtual visits to museums, heritage sites, and more.

Q: What is the justice pilgrimage? How does it work?

A: The justice pilgrimage is a 7-10 day immersive travel experience to cities in the U.S. South, including Atlanta, Georgia and Birmingham, Selma, Montgomery, and Tuskegee, Alabama. On the journey, Sankofa Tzedek will visit sites of heritage and history for Black and Jewish communities, meet with civil rights leaders of the past and present, and engage in intergroup reflection and dialogue. If conditions permit, this journey will take place in early May (after the semester ends and the program formally concludes). It will not be a required experience.

Q: Do I have to pay to be a part of this program?

A: There are no program fees required to participate in Sankofa Tzedek.

Q: What is the stipend?

A: Sankofa Tzedek depends on reliable participation in order for the program to meet its goals. In recognition of the time commitment that students will be asked to invest, the program will offer a \$600 stipend for full participation, to be distributed throughout the year.

Q: How do I join?

A: Applications are [available online](#) and will be accepted on a rolling basis through October 12 at noon EDT. Facilitators will reach out to applicants to schedule interviews during October.

Contact sankofa.tzedek@columbia.edu with any additional questions.



Image: A group photo of fourteen students and three staff members standing together in Lerner Hall.