Sankofa: An exploration of community, solidarity, and justice

*Sankofa:*
From the Akan tribe in Ghana, symbolizing a quest for knowledge based on critical examination, and intelligent, patient investigation. Sankofa recognizes that as a people moves forward, the knowledge of the past must never be forgotten.

(Carter G. Woodson Center)

*Tzedek:*
Hebrew word for “justice” as found in the biblical phrase “Justice. Justice. Shall you pursue.” (Deuteronomy 16:20)

Black and Jewish communities, once seen as natural allies in various social movements, have faced increasing separation and tension in recent decades. Sankofa Tzedek will 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.

**Q: What is Sankofa Tzedek?**
A: We aim to bring together a cohort of students on campus for a semester 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 in New York City and beyond, 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 is this program being 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: 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.

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.
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Q: Where will the cohort meet?
A: The cohort will meet on campus and also take offsite trips to locations such as Harlem, Crown Heights, and the Lower East Side to visit with activists and sites of importance to Black and Jewish histories in New York.

Q: How often does the cohort meet?
A: The following meeting times will be required of accepted participants. Please plan your spring semester schedule accordingly (we will notify you before class selection begins if you’ve been accepted into the program).

- Meet & Greet/Winter Holiday Celebration: Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2018 (6:15pm-7:30pm)
- MLK Weekend Retreat/Kickoff: Friday, January 18 - Sunday, January 20, 2019
- Friday Programs (11:00am - 5:00pm)
  - Friday, February 15, 2019
  - Friday, March 8, 2019
  - Friday, April 12, 2019
- Ally Week (TBD in April): Participants will facilitate programming for the broader community
- Closing Lunch: Friday, May 3, 2019 (12:00pm - 2:00pm)

Q: How do I join?
A: Applications are available online and are due by 11:59pm on Tuesday, November 6. Facilitators will review applications during the following weeks and extend offers after Thanksgiving Break, during the week of November 26. Cohort participants will be finalized by Dec. 1, which is the first day of class registration for spring semester, so that students can plan their schedules accordingly.

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