

WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY FAITH BASED

Two years ago, during Pride Month, we posted an encouragement on our social media channels to Black Trans College students. The response from concerned donors was not at all what I expected and it forced me to really think about who we are as an organization, what we will not apologize for, and what it means to us when we say that Sub:Culture was founded as a faith-based nonprofit.

I had to do some soul searching.

When I started Sub:Culture in 2018, I'd watched students face significant barriers to their academic success and spiritual well-being. I identified four main categories of barriers that my students and students across the country seemed to be encountering. There were spiritual barriers, students had a hard time making meaning and sensing the goodness of God because the discipleship methods being used to do so, called their ethnic identity and sense of dignity into question.

There were academic barriers, Black students were more likely to experience harassment and discrimination on campus related to their race. It resulted in negative educational outcomes like lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and lower rates of admission into post graduate education. There were the socioeconomic barriers, many of my students were the first to attend college, worked an insane amount of hours in order to pay for school which limited their ability to socially engage and enjoy such a unique time in life.

The stressors related to race (both institutionalized and internalized), the pressure of maintaining grades to keep a scholarship, do well to take care of family back home, and/or the constant feeling of restlessness led to the last barrier—social and emotional. Last June, we learned that there was a group of black students that needed to be especially advocated for within the Black community and we did. We helped two trans students who were homeless during their semester breaks after coming out to family at home.

We realized that Black students who identified as (LGBTQ+) often faced even more adversity at school due to the intersection of their marginalized identities. These barriers are even higher for Black transgender people, who have double the unemployment rate of all transgender people, and four times that of the U.S. general population.

Transgender and gender-expansive people are put at greater risk for poverty, homelessness and involvement with criminalized work. Together, these factors put transgender people at an increased risk of violence and danger. The victimization and discrimination result in poorer educational outcomes and decreased psychological well-being. Further, they have limited or no access resources that may improve their student experience.

Addressing the concerns of Black LGBTQ+ students requires an intersectional approach that takes into account all the aspects of their experiences of oppression: racism, homophobia, and

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transphobia,

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Black LGBTQ students deserve to have the opportunity to learn and succeed in supportive school environments that are free from bias, harassment, and discrimination, but they don't often get it. In addition, many of these students have a deep and rich connection to the Black Church but have also undergone magnificent transformations their lives that make them outsiders to many spaces.

As the founder and chief executive officer at Sub:Culture I approached the Board of Directors and together we've concluded that our programs, curriculum, and crisis relief fund will be aimed at paying particular attention to the needs of students who lie at the intersection of multiple forms of bias and marginalization.

Sub:Culture is committed to doing what we can to be a 'stand-in' support system, providing resources that aid in students' academic success, and their spiritual, social, and emotional well-being. Most of all we hope to be responsible for a resounding confidence that they are loved, seen, and valuable to their Creator.

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We want to thank those who have been a part of our success over the years as an organization but are unable to continue with us in good conscience in light of our affirmation and acceptance of LGBTQ+ students. We understand, and we thank you for all that you have done. We are hoping that for others, our firm commitment to these students will resonate with you and that you will continue to partner with us in removing these barriers for Black students.

For us, that's what it means to be faith based.

For me, that's what it means to follow Christ—to partner with him in setting the lonely in family, removing barriers to the knowledge and experience of God's love, kindness, mercy, and advocating in tangible ways so that temporary roadblocks don't become permanent dead ends for students with marginalized identities.

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FAQ

1. What does it mean now that Sub:Culture is a faith based nonprofit in this new way?

For us, this isn't a new way of being faith-based. We just needed to make it clear what we meant by the phrase. This is what faithfulness looks like to us. It means that in keeping with our values, we will not shy away from seeking to engage and understand the barriers our students face. It means that we will be unapologetic in our advocacy for their rights as citizens and their value as image bearers. It means we will be vocal about the realities facing marginalized students including but not limited to LGBTQ+ students.

Partnering with Christ in setting the lonely in family; removing barriers to the knowledge and experience of God's love, kindness, and mercy; and advocating in tangible ways so that temporary roadblocks don't become permanent dead ends – for us, that's what it means to follow Christ. That's what it means to be faith based.

2. How will my donation be used differently than before?

It won't. All one time and recurring donations will be used to support or programming, infrastructure, and outreach. Sponsor donations, (those who give exclusively to the Crisis Relief Fund) will be used to respond to applications that come in from students all over the country.