

BSU members spray paint bull outside of Student Union

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The UB community woke up Wednesday morning to "Black Lives Matter" painted in red, black and green on the bull outside of the Student Union.

Several members of Black Student Union (BSU) painted the bull in the pouring rain, slipping and falling into the mud on the ground on Tuesday night. They held towels and umbrellas over the bull. One group dried the bull while another group spray painted it.

An unknown group spray-painted the bull with a message reading "Trump, Make America Great Again" on Tuesday. BSU painted over it because they felt the previous message threatened students' safety and encouraged hate and division.

Student Life set out specific guidelines that students must follow when painting the bull. Students can only paint on it between sunset and sunrise; only one group at a time can paint the bull and students must show respect to Buffalo and members of UB's community.

"The rules of painting on the bull say you have to respect everyone in the community, and I do feel like we all know the connotation towards Trump and towards 'Make America Great Again,'" said Chynna Brown, a junior African American Studies and psychology major. "I feel like it definitely projects hate and it projects division but I feel



TROY WACHALA, THE SPECTRUM

Members of the Black Student Union painted "Black Lives Matter" on the bull outside of the Student Union on Tuesday night.

like Black Lives Matter is inclusive and it's spotlighting one group who has never been included."

University Police Deputy Chief of Police Josh Sticht said Student Life placed the bull outside of the Student Union for students to paint on. While other universities have things like rocks or pillars for students to paint, the bull is the canvas for UB student groups, he said.

All student groups are allowed to decorate

on the bull, as long as they don't paint anything against UB's policy on harassment or threats, according to Sticht.

Brown was disappointed that Student Life didn't want to get involved when "Make America Great Again" was painted on the bull. When students contacted them to complain, Student Life staff said the bull is for the students and students are the only ones who can go out and change it, Brown said.

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"I feel like the university should stand for what they advocate for and that's diversity and that's inclusion and that's making everybody feel safe and be able to have a learning environment and I feel that's not what was displayed by them not taking a stance," she said.

Brown said she saw a Muslim woman crying after she saw the pro-Trump message that was previously on the bull.

"When you hear Make America Great Again, you also hear 'remember the old days. Remember how things used to be. Remember what used to happen.' The connotation of that term is disrespectful to people of color," Brown said.

BSU Vice President Leslie Veloz said BSU decided to paint over the bull to "acknowledge everyone's oppressions."

"That's just the role we take on when we signed up for BSU is to make sure we were that voice and we were those defenders for people who can't defend themselves," Veloz said. "We aren't afraid to be those changing agents."

BSU President Samirra Felix didn't want "Make America Great Again" to be the first thing students saw when they came to school.

"Though we know writing 'Make America Great Again' is not necessarily a hate crime,

there's a lot that is behind putting that up. First and foremost there was never a point in time that I can say that America was truly great. A lot of people like to take slavery and categorize that as African American history. It is American history."

BSU members deliberately chose the colors red, black and green because they represent kanara of Kwanzaa, a black holiday. The colors stand for the seven days and seven principles of Kwanzaa.

Brown said they purposely painted the bull in a messy fashion as a symbol.

"It's not neat, it's not precise," Brown said. "It's the red dripping down into the green and the black dripping down. There's gold beneath the letters to make the words jump out at you. This is the blood of our people. There's a lot of symbolism with it."

Brown invites people who feel uncomfortable with the bull to attend BSU meetings to ask themselves why they're offended.

"If you're comfortable everywhere you go, you're going to remain stagnant and remain dormant. If somebody makes you feel uncomfortable, you feel as if you are obligated to make a decision. So I feel like whoever was uncomfortable seeing the bull... that was the goal," Brown said.

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