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## **BHS GIRLS BASKETBALL - Pregame Statement 2.7.23**

**Burlington, VT** Racism is endemic in our society and prevalent in our everyday lives. It is something that affects us deeply as young people of the global majority. The nature of certain words and actions can hurt more than physical harm, and it is important to name that racism is an act of violence. We understand that people make mistakes, and we not only want people to be held accountable, but when there is deep harm caused as a result of those actions, we want to see accountability within the system.

Tonight, we wanted to shift the narrative about the last month. We understand that we are one of the most diverse programs in the state of Vermont, and naturally, attention and criticism will find us. We want to remind everyone that despite the criticism we have received, we were not the first, last, or only school that elected not to play CVU. Rice, MMU, and Essex all took a stand against racism and are also calling for change. Although we disagreed with CVU's policies and procedures, our conversations have led them to revisit those policies and procedures while sparking statewide conversations about how to address racism head-on. Change has been our primary focus over the last month, and we don't want that to be lost.

What we hope to achieve through our continued efforts is to bring attention and focus to the systemic issues that have plagued our Vermont sports community for decades. We are seeking accountability within the structures and there will be no change unless we all demand it. We urge you to not simply focus on the single incident of the now infamous TikTok video, but to contemplate the larger structures that allow a culture of racism in Vermont high school athletics to persist.

We hope to have further conversations with CVU, other Vermont school districts, and the VPA to push systemic change. Lastly, we want to be clear that we are opponents in a game, not enemies; sports are supposed to be fun! And we also want to be clear that hate has no place here!

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Burlington School District (BSD) is a pre-k-12 public school system of about 4,000 students in Burlington, VT. BSD's mission is to graduate students who: value different cultures, engage with the community, communicate effectively, think creatively, skillfully solve problems, and achieve at their highest academic, intellectual, and personal potential. *Join the Journey!* [www.bsdvt.org](http://www.bsdvt.org)