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Two racist incidents in one week 'unacceptable and undesirable,' vice-principal (academic) says

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Vice-Principal (Academic) Patrick Deane says the University has a Diversity and Equity Taskforce that's looking into curbing racism at Queen's.

**Credit:**

Journal File Photo

Two racist incidents that occurred on and around campus last week prompted online reaction from Principal Daniel Woolf and Vice-Principal (Academic) Patrick Deane.

Woolf and Deane jointly signed a statement condemning the incidents.

"Racist actions and attitudes have no place at this University where we have an obligation, and opportunity, to educate one another to overcome stereotypes and prejudices," the 160-word document posted to Queen's news centre on Mar. 11 read.

One of the incidents occurred at the An Clachan Complex, a series of 19 apartment buildings located a 10 to 30 minute walk from West Campus and Main Campus, respectively.

Three vehicles in the An Clachan parking lot were each vandalized with racist graffiti. One car had "Jew" written on it and two others each had "nigger" written on them.

The second incident occurred on Mar. 9, when incoming AMS president Safiah Chowdhury was subject to derogatory slurs in Stauffer Library.

"There were two students talking to each other. One said to the other, 'Oh, I'm freaking out right now, the Taliban turban of terror is sitting down here,'" Chowdhury said.

The incident gained campus-wide attention after Chowdhury wrote about it on her Twitter page and campus publication cultureSHOCK!: an anti-racist review redelivered the message in mass.

Deane told the Journal he and Woolf were prompted to speak out because the two incidents occurred so close together.

"Because there were two incidents of very different types we felt it necessary to reinstate that the attitudes that lie behind these acts are unacceptable and undesirable at the University," Deane said. "I think it's important for everyone in the Queen's community to know that their safety and security as well as their pride are not going to be subject to attack."

Deane said the University has been working with Kingston to address incidents of racism that occur off campus, such as the graffiti at An Clachan.

"We've been working with the city on this issue through one of our joint committees," he said, adding that it's difficult in the case of incidents like the one at An Clachan to say whether Queen's students or citizens of Kingston were the perpetrators.

Deane said students who have been targeted or affected by racism can take advantage of resources such as counselling services through Student Affairs, Campus Security and the Human Rights Office.

Another measure taken by the University to curb racism is the Diversity and Equity Taskforce, led by history professor Adnan Husain, Deane said.

He said the taskforce aims to implement recommendations that have been made in recent reports in regards to racism.

"They're doing an assessment of which recommendations have been implemented and by extension what needs to be done in the shorter and longer term," he said. "In that way, we are moving the discussion on campus along."

Deane said he thinks racism is still a prevalent problem in Canada and the Queen's and Kingston communities are no exception.

"I think racism is an issue still in Canadian society at large and our community, like any other community in our country, is prone to these problems once in a while," he said. "I think the way to combat is for everybody to be very aware of the threat and take action when it occurs. When racism articulates itself, it's an important obligation of the entire University community to speak against it."

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