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Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

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Provost's Statement on Confronting Anti-Black Racism at Queen's

June 8, 2020

I have been deeply distressed by the ongoing events in the US and Canada sparked by the tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of the police, and the systemic anti-Black racism in our societies that contribute to such outcomes. Racism exists in many forms throughout society, and Queen's is certainly not immune. Over the past year there have been several racist incidents on our campus, and even though we continue to fight against these actions, it is clear we still have much to do. Many members of the Queen's community have reached out to me about what actions Queen's can and should take to address these issues.

In the Principal's [recent statement](#), he encouraged us all to "take time to reflect on our own experiences and biases, and encourage everyone to learn about and understand how to challenge racism in all its forms." For me, an important part of that reflection was attending the Black Lives Matter rally in Kingston. I was extremely heartened to see the outpouring of support in our local community. Personally, as an Indigenous family, my own children have been "carded" and as a parent I have had that difficult and careful discussion with them regarding how they should respond when interacting with authorities. I have also taken time to reflect on discussions with my mentor, Professor Barrington Batchelor, who was a tireless advocate for race relations at Queen's. He was the first person to enlighten me on the realities of racial profiling by police, and his sage advice has always guided me in my career, especially when advocating for issues of justice and equity.

As I have previously expressed, advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigeneity, and accessibility issues at Queen's is a top priority for me. As Principal Deane mentioned, "At Queen's, we know that we have much work in this regard still to do." As Provost, my role is to operationalize the actions we need to take. From my previous work with the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism Diversity and Inclusion (PICRDI) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Task Force, I know that we have clear strategies identified in these documents, but we need to redouble our efforts and commitments. Deputy Provost Teri Shearer has demonstrated excellent leadership in implementing many of the recommendations in these reports, and I will work closely with her going forward.

I believe that education is power, and some of the most powerful recommendations in these reports relate to ensuring our graduates understand racism, unconscious bias, and systemic oppression. As such, we have started to implement anti-oppression, anti-racist, and Indigenous content into our curricula throughout the university. I have recently seen some excellent examples of strategies for implementing Indigenous content into remote delivery through a partnership between the Faculty of Education and the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and I have asked the CTL to develop similar templates for anti-racist and anti-oppression content. We also have a newly developed BA Minor/General in Black Studies that will need appropriate support to fulfill its objectives.

While these initiatives are good first steps, the fight against racism is difficult and complex. There is much to do to address the systemic barriers that exist throughout the university, and I am committed to identifying and addressing these barriers. When we see racism we must name it and bring it into the light. I join the Principal in encouraging all members of the Queen's community to reflect on their own bias and to remain vigilant, and to call out racism when they see it. We must continue to fight for a Queen's that is open, equitable, and inclusive for all.

For our students seeking help in coping with current events, [student support counsellors](#) are available, as well as [Empower Me](#) and [Good2Talk](#), which can provide 24/7 access to a counsellor. Staff and faculty may access support through our [Employee and Family Assistance](#) (EFAP) program. Our [Human Rights and Equity Office](#) is also available to consult with any member of our university community.

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