
Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review Report



We would like to thank the Black students, faculty and staff who shared their personal experiences with us as well as the changes they would like to see on campus.



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Letter from President Dr. Mohamed Lachemi

Ten years ago, an Anti-Racism Task Force at Ryerson University released a report that examined systemic racism and barriers on campus while laying out recommendations to create a more inclusive campus environment for all students, faculty and staff to study, work and teach.

While we have made some progress towards furthering equity, diversity and inclusion at Ryerson—including hiring the first vice-president position fully dedicated to equity and community inclusion at a Canadian university, and hosting the first White Privilege Conference in Canada—more direct action needs to be taken and more work needs to be done to realize social progress and racial equality.

The last few months have brought an intense focus on anti-Black racism; however, Ryerson has been on this journey for some time. In 2019, I tasked the Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion with conducting an Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review.

I am very pleased that we are able to share The Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review with the Ryerson community. I want to thank all of the Black students, faculty and staff who came forward and participated in the process.

This report comes at a very important time for Ryerson and for the world around us. Current events are unfolding globally against centuries of historically systemic racism which has disproportionately disadvantaged the Black community. It comes at a time when all people and communities of privilege have a responsibility to challenge and dismantle anti-Black racism and discrimination.

The completion of The Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review is just the first step in a journey for Ryerson. We must continue to drive change and take serious meaningful action to create a future in which all Black students, faculty and staff on our campus feel welcome, included and can bring their whole selves to Ryerson to work, learn, research, teach and succeed.

The next step will be carried out by the Presidential Implementation Committee, which has been tasked with addressing the recommendations included in the report.

If we act now to realize our shared future, just imagine where we can be in 10 years. We must remain vigilant in facing anti-Black racism, racial discrimination and systemic racism, and continue to take action.

Dr. Mohamed Lachemi
President and Vice-Chancellor
Ryerson University

Foreword from Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion Dr. Denise O’Neil Green

Universities are often considered places of discovery, where people are encouraged to think critically and freely, and where education and research transform lives. Many perceive higher education as being progressive and inclusive, yet what the research shows is that we appear better on paper than in daily practice.

Through their scholarship and service to our multiple communities, faculty and staff at Ryerson have the power to dramatically change students’ lives for the better. By intentionally contributing to a more accessible, diverse and inclusive campus, the onus is on all of us to work together in cultivating an environment:

- **where everyone feels they belong;**
- **that is reflective of our school’s entire population; and**
- **where people feel welcomed, valued, seen and heard.**

Simply put, discrimination in any form cannot be tolerated on our campus.

As enrolment rates have demonstrated, Ryerson University continues to be the university of choice. In recent years, we have also seen our profile elevated as a leader in equity, diversity and inclusion among universities. As equity, diversity and inclusion leaders, we cannot, therefore, be complacent. We must continuously strive to make the Ryerson experience positive for everyone.

It is for this reason that the university conducted the **Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review.**

The term ‘anti-Black racism’ was first used in a Canadian context by Dr. Akua Benjamin (Professor Emeritus and former Director of Ryerson’s School of Social Work). It refers to the ways in which Black/African Canadians experience racism, and the historical legacy of slavery in Canada. Dr. Benjamin’s work “seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black Canadians and the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black-African descent in Canada.”

Anti-Black racism is defined as policies and practices embedded in Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada.

The purpose of this Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review is to share the real-life experiences of our Black students, faculty and staff, and to better understand the realities they experience with anti-Black racism in a Canadian institution, so that they can thrive academically, professionally and personally.

In this report, you will discover that for a number of our Black students, racial discrimination remains prevalent. It impacts their grades, confidence, sense of security, mental health and ultimately, their desire to graduate from Ryerson, despite our persistent efforts to make our campus more inclusive.

Staff at Ryerson raised concerns about pay disparity as a day-to-day reality. They also reported concerns about promotions and career progression. Black faculty participants reported facing burdens associated with being underrepresented in their departments, including disproportionate mentorship responsibilities and greater demands of their time.

No university is immune to the long-standing impacts of racism and racial discrimination, even in Canada. All academic institutions struggle with racial issues. However, it is our responsibility to combat these inequities to create a real, genuine culture of inclusion at Ryerson where everyone feels that their dignity is protected.

As we reflect on our progress over the past 10 years, we can see that we have made significant strides in a positive, unifying direction. It was the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism in 2017 that stated, “Eradicating anti-Black racism is not a task that [institutions] alone can do. This is collective work. It requires mutually reinforcing efforts from all orders of government, institutions, businesses, schools, community agencies and individuals. That is how sustainable, long-term, societal impact will be achieved.” This is why we are appealing to our Ryerson University community—students, faculty and staff—to read this report and join us to ensure that Ryerson becomes a more inclusive environment for all.

I look forward to working with and hearing from every member of the Ryerson community as we work to disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression and anti-Black racism that are affecting our students, faculty and staff, while we work together to build a stronger and more vibrant and inclusive Ryerson community.

Dr. Denise O’Neil Green
Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion,
Ryerson University



Executive Summary

Anti-Black racism continues to be a problem on college and university campuses across Canada, and Ryerson is no exception despite our continued efforts to improve the situation for Black students, faculty and staff.

Nearly 10 years ago, an [Anti-Racism Task Force at Ryerson University released a report](#) that examined systemic racial issues and barriers on campus while laying out recommendations for change. Of the 59 sub-recommendations, 52 have been put into practice or are currently in development following the release of that report. More recently, though, the student-run Black Liberation Collective - Ryerson raised new concerns regarding the prevalence of anti-Black racism on campus. To better understand the experiences of Black students, faculty and staff on campus and the impact of these experiences—and as the 10th anniversary of the initial Anti-Racism Task Force report approached—Ryerson University launched a new Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review in 2019.

Ultimately, this report revealed that we have more work to do in ensuring Black students, faculty and staff—individuals who clearly expressed loyalty and commitment to Ryerson throughout their interviews—feel equal, safe and welcome on campus. The following summarizes findings from the focus groups and one-on-one interviews held with students, faculty and staff who identify as Black over the course of four months, March to June 2019.

Anti-Black Racism

There are various forms of anti-Black racism and bias, all of which can be seriously damaging to individuals and impact their participation in the Ryerson community. The experience of racism encountered by the participants was largely based on being identified as Black people by other people who were not Black. Anti-Black racism as a practice is one in which Black people are singled out first based on skin colour and treated differently in a disadvantageous fashion. In institutions like universities, anti-Black racism is experienced as systemic exclusion of Black people; making Black people feel out of place, diminishing and excluding specific references to them, producing demeaning and distorting ideas and images of them. Experience also includes a lack of representation across all areas of the institution, the use of racist language and hostility, and a range of other modes and practices both subtle and overt that send the message that Black people are neither a priority nor fully welcome on the same or equal terms with others. Some or all of these conditions can combine to produce the negative effects of anti-Black racism.

Students

The majority of students interviewed had specific stories of experiencing anti-Black racism on campus, in their classrooms and elsewhere. From lack of representation, to experiencing hostility, to a sense of not belonging to the larger Ryerson community, Black students articulated an experience that requires redress. Black students reported a set of complex and

complicated responses to their experience of anti-Black racism at Ryerson that they understood to place them at a marked disadvantage in the institution. The broad spectrum of issues articulated involved: a sense of not belonging; lack of representation in the curriculum; safety moving around the campus; underrepresentation of Black faculty; issues with mentorship and problems with front-facing services like Student Life, Student Affairs, Counselling Services, the Human Rights Office, Security Services, etc. Black students made it clear that anti-Black racism is a feature of their experience at Ryerson and they want it to change in a positive way.

Staff

Black staff are adamant that anti-Black racism is a defining feature of their work life at the university. They articulated everything from banal day-to-day racism to larger and more systemic issues like compensation disparities, moving up the ranks based on years of service, being passed over for promotions and remaining on contracts or “term positions” much longer than their colleagues. In summary, Black staff interviewed made it clear that practices of nepotism, exclusion from friendship circles and a failure to see them as viable for advanced positions are all significant features of their work life at Ryerson. Despite this, Black staff remain loyal to Ryerson but often felt that the loyalty was not returned to them.

Faculty

The underrepresentation of Black faculty at Ryerson is not outside the norm among post-secondary institutions in Canada. Black faculty find themselves isolated in their departments and programs, whether they are tenured or pre-tenure, or they are contract, part-time and sessional faculty. They also find themselves burdened in a number of ways that are unique to them. Chief among this is the mentorship of Black students, which requires a serious time commitment and often has them working beyond their areas of specialization and teaching. Black faculty interviewed also reported being greeted with suspicions about their expertise from both colleagues and non-Black students, reporting the workplace as a hostile environment.

Recommendations

Anti-Black racism can be interrupted by good policy, clear lines of reporting and focused interventions, along with a rigorous commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion that is sustained and clearly visible in its implementation. The recommendations outlined in this report can work to build upon Ryerson’s pioneering efforts among post-secondary institutions in Canada to create a more inclusive environment that encourages the full participation of all university members.



Introduction

Interview Methodology

In March 2019, students, faculty and staff from Ryerson University were invited to share their experiences of anti-Black racism on campus. Thirty-five students, 20 staff and 13 faculty participated, with all details of their interviews having been anonymized.

Focus group discussions were coordinated along with some one-on-one interviews conducted from March to June 2019. The majority of participants were students, faculty and staff who identified as Black, supported by additional interviews with non-Black individuals who provided their perception of acts of anti-Black racism at Ryerson. The interview questions were open-ended and constructed so that participants would define their experience rather than the interviewer assuming the experience from the outset.

Interviews were conducted in a focus group setting for most students and staff, with some participants from those two groups opting for individual interviews. There were over 35 students interviewed in multiple focus groups and a few students interviewed individually (these were students who showed up outside of scheduled interview hours). Twenty staff members were also interviewed mostly in focus group settings, with some individuals having requested one-on-one interviews. Faculty interviews were completed individually with 13 tenure-stream, tenured and contract faculty.

The interviews conducted constitute the basis of this report and the recommendations made herein articulate avenues of redress for the three constituencies. These recommendations are also drawn from the participants' suggestions of how to make the Ryerson experience more positive for all.





The Student Experience

Black students at Ryerson interviewed for this report articulated a set of complex and complicated responses to their experiences of anti-Black racism on campus. The range of issues include: not having a sense of belonging; gaps in curriculum; safety on campus; lack of faculty representation; mentorship; and problems with front-facing services for students.

It is important to note that Black students made clear that they chose Ryerson for two primary reasons:

- 1. The unique nature of the programs, and;**
- 2. Their understanding that Ryerson was, and is, a diverse school and thus a diverse campus.**

One issue of concern for Black students is that while the Ryerson community appeared diverse, their specific programs often did not reflect this. For example, a student in a professional program counted about eight Black students across the years of the program. This same student also pointed out that the requirements to enter the program, especially the portfolio stage were vague, with little information and guidance given. This was viewed as an exclusionary practice by this student, who only entered the program after two attempts due to coincidentally having met someone familiar with the program who helped prepare this student's second application to the program. Black students interviewed also articulated a view of the curriculum as the "white

experience." Many reported that to find scholarships for their programs and in the areas of their academic interests—in and on Black life—the only place available was Caribbean studies. Some students expressed a need for Black scholarships and Black Studies to exist across the university. They were also concerned that very few professors were Black, with a number of students interviewed admitting that in multiple years of their programs they had not been taught by any Black professors and that they understood this as an impoverishment of the educational content in the program. Indeed, students expressed a longing to be taught by more Black professors across disciplines and programs, very clearly noting a need for more diverse faculty.

Further, many students reported hostility from their white professors. Students discussed preferential treatment given to others and not to them, occurring in blatant fashion. They also reported curriculum materials that denigrated Black people while some experienced the classroom as a place of hostility from both their professors and classmates. Students reported being reprimanded by professors and teaching assistants for speaking up and bringing the Black experience into classroom discussions. They reported that when they raised issues related to the curriculum that often their professors and teaching assistants could not adequately explain the curriculum choices and decisions or account for the exclusion of Black contributions, examples and scholarships from their courses. The experience of having to challenge their professors and teaching assistants left Black students feeling demoralized.

One student from a more traditional discipline expressed disappointment in only being taught the traditional canon, known as the classic works of literature. This student had chosen to leave another university for Ryerson because of its diversity, eventually defining the Ryerson experience as, “same deal, different school.” The sentiment of this student was repeated and affirmed by others. Another student in journalism explained this situation by stating that their classmates are “not my people,” having identified only three other Black female students in the program and no Black professors. Nonetheless, the student valued the program to a certain degree and was resigned to making “the best of a bad situation.” Students expressed these sentiments in business, history, engineering, nursing, social work and a range of other disciplines and programs. One student reported being pinpointed by a professor who said “my kind struggle most in the program.” The student felt that such a comment already positioned them as a potential failure in the program and that these kinds of attitudes make life difficult for Black students.

Students also pointed out that current faculty often struggle with teaching materials related to Black people when they attempt to incorporate it. They also reported that current faculty appeared and articulated a fear of teaching about issues related to Blackness and race. The paradox of the situation left students feeling stranded in their programs and stunted in their scholarly pursuits.

Clearly the problem of anti-Black racism is systemic, and students experience it intuitively, in terms of the history of experiences they bring with them and as scholars seeking to deepen their knowledge in various programs and fields. During the focus groups, Black students expressed a sense of resignation to achieving their degree surrounded by anti-Black racism. It is not ideal, but it is what they are willing and forced to live with to achieve the degree. On the experience of being Black at Ryerson, one student said, “I feel I would be more offended if I was not used to it.”

Reporting Incidents of Anti-Black Racism

Related to the classroom and curriculum issues, students articulated a need for “accountability at Ryerson,” as one participant expressed. Black students reported going to front-facing offices like Student Affairs, Student Life, Human Rights and Counselling Services to address issues ranging from mistreatment in class and funding issues to classmate hostility and being sent from office to office with no resolution in sight. In describing the experience, students were clear that they felt no one was willing to be accountable to them especially when they had complaints about being violated. Students came to believe that the practice of being “shuttled around” was a deliberate action to frustrate their attempts to seek remedies for their complaints. This experience was particularly upsetting and frustrating for students interviewed and many resigned themselves to an understanding that to achieve their degrees they would simply have to endure being treated differently from everyone else on campus, acknowledging they have little power to impact the experiences they are having at Ryerson. Issues of security and safety were particularly felt in this way.



Safety

Campus safety and security is extremely complex and requires a delicate balance between ensuring the safety and security of members of the community and actions of those charged with the enforcement of safety and security rules and regulations. These challenges are shared in common across all universities in Canada and in society in general. The history of carding and racial profiling in our society and on campuses speak volumes about the experiences, particularly of young Black men who come into contact with law enforcement officers. These challenges however take very specific forms at Ryerson because of the university's physical location in and interconnectedness with the heart of the city of Toronto.

At Ryerson, the Black students who attended the focus groups reported that they experience and witness security as an intimidating force. They spoke to us about the disparities of campus "policing" for Black students and white students. They were, and are, concerned about campus security working in groups, though it should be noted that campus security staff are expected to work in pairs both for their own safety and for the safety of the community. Students told us that Black students are "policed" differently and often campus security staff linger in the corridors at events they frequent or just outside the building where such events are held.

Students found such practices intimidating and unsafe for them. Students report being followed on campus, asked for ID, and experiencing the condition of always assumed as not belonging. The experience has left students confused and sad about Ryerson's claims of diversity. Students report being targeted at library closing hours to quickly pack up and leave while they witness their white peers lingering and never being rushed. Students report similar experiences in sporting venues on campus as well. One example that stands out was recounted by a student who described being followed by a group of campus security who requested this student's ID and questioned the student about being on campus. When the student attempted to get the information

from one of the campus security officers, things escalated and the other security officers blocked the view of the student so the name badge could not be seen. This incident coupled with a hostile living environment deeply impacted this student's sense of Ryerson as an unsafe place. The incident was dealt with and diversity and sensitivity training sessions have been implemented.

Similar stories and concerns about campus security were repeated throughout interviews, with Black students making it clear that campus security does not make them feel safe but rather the opposite. Black students feel profoundly subject to racial profiling and this has produced a strong sense of non-belonging to the Ryerson community. Students point out that complaints procedures are very lengthy and act as a deterrent for filing complaints and seeing them through the process. Black students are especially keen to see campus security reforms that would centre their concerns and shift the tenor from one that assumes Black people are not a part of the Ryerson community to one in which Black people are assumed to automatically belong.

It should be noted that those charged with ensuring the safety and security of the Ryerson campus on a day to day, hour by hour basis come from varied backgrounds and 59% self-identify as coming from racialized minority backgrounds. Theirs is not an easy job as they too face taunts, intimidation and the threat of violence, and racialized security staff face racial taunts, intimidation and racialized physical and psychological violence.

This being said there is a need for an open and honest and constructive dialogue involving all campus safety and security staff and Black students, faculty and staff.

Student Recommendations

1. A concerted and deliberate effort to diversify disciplines and programs should be undertaken. This would include curriculum, internships, placements and other program practices that impact student success.
 2. Campus-wide training in equity, diversity and inclusion across all disciplines and programs that is sustained and reinforced by leadership.
 3. Black faculty representation needs to be addressed in programs, departments, schools and faculties.
 4. Campus safety and security needs to be prioritized to positively impact Black student belonging, with security to be trained in equity, diversity and inclusion.
 5. Funding of events, meetings and information sessions that specifically support and centre Black students should be created and/or enhanced.
 6. A dedicated Black student space on campus with the necessary resources allocated to it for Black students to feel safe and a sense of belonging is needed. These resources should involve funds for staffing and programming for Black students.
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Staff

Black staff at Ryerson are adamant that anti-Black racism is a defining feature of their work life at the university. Staff articulated everything from banal day-to-day racism to larger and more systemic issues like compensation disparities, inability to move up the ranks, being passed over for promotions and being on contracts or “termed positions” long-term. The precarious nature of staff positions led to many concerns about the confidential nature of this report but they still felt it was necessary and important to participate. Some staff feared reprisals, while others were indifferent, and many hoped that this report might lead to a sustained and programmatic change in the institution.

Black staff expressed the following: being passed over for positions; having criteria for open positions changed on them; having their experience and years of service treated differently from their white counterparts, and; being disadvantaged by nepotism and or not belonging to cliques and/or other social formations that work to benefit others who want to move up in their careers at the university. Black staff feel like perpetual outsiders.

Relatedly, Black staff are also distrustful of the unions that are supposed to represent their interests. They reported being talked out of bringing grievances and close ties between union representatives and human resources professionals. In terms of the latter, Black staff felt that the reputation of Ryerson as an institution where a number of people in important decision-making positions have worked together for a long time often worked against Black staff and their interests and future goals at the university.

Staff members who have been long-term Ryerson employees shared stories of being promoted but being offered less compensation than their counterparts even though they had more formal education. They also reported being told that they did not qualify for a position because they lacked an educational credential (for example an undergraduate degree) only to see the position given to a white colleague who similarly did not have the requisite credentials. Other long-term staff told stories of applying for positions and not being considered only then to be asked to train the person hired for the position. Black staff feels strongly that the institution is incapable of seeing them in positions of authority.

A small number of Black staff who hold positions of authority spoke of the hostile environment in which they must do their work and of attempts to undermine them in their positions. One such person even mentioned being physically assaulted by their supervisor.

Again, the paradox is that many of the Black staff articulated that they took positions at Ryerson based on its assumed diversity only to be disappointed by the lack

of respect for diversity. Thus, staff spoke of “disparities in treatment” and being “singled out by supervisors” and/or being told that they were passed over for promotion because they lacked “visibility in their present role.” Many staff admitted that they often felt like “the odd one out” in their units making it challenging to go to people about concerns. Finally, Black staff spoke of taking it upon themselves to mentor Black students and to look out for them in other ways because of the hostile environment that they have witnessed in their units. Thus, Black staff took on roles beyond their paid positions out of a moral and ethical responsibility to the university community. These roles were and are done out of their own sense of fairness and justice and are not shared with those they are looking out for. Indeed, in some of the professional programs Black staff pointed out that disparities result in who among the students are selected for or supported in their internships and other placements in contradistinction to Black students. This is just one example of this ethical care they must take on.

Ultimately, staff asked themselves the question: “Why did I stay here this long?” Many long-term staff felt demoralized. They spoke of being at the university for ten years or more and still being at the same employment grade. Black staff experience their work life at Ryerson as constantly being entry level, resulting in a somewhat pessimistic outlook for Black staff at the university.

Staff Recommendations

1. A comprehensive review of Black staff compensation, grade, rank and the ways in which Black staff files are handled.
2. A process of building trust among Black staff that involves both unions and senior management at the university.
3. The establishment of programs designed for staff advancement that specifically target Black staff.



Faculty

Ryerson is not dissimilar from the post-secondary landscape in Ontario and Canada as it pertains to the underrepresentation of Black faculty. As such, Black faculty at Ryerson find themselves isolated in their departments and programs. They also find themselves burdened in a number of ways that are unique, chief among these being the mentorship of Black students, which adds to their already heavy workloads. Black faculty experience themselves as having to represent more than their areas of specialization and teaching. They are also greeted with suspicions about their expertise from both colleagues and non-Black students; and Black faculty report the workplace as a hostile environment.

Contract Faculty

Contract faculty are particularly precarious and cautious about speaking up for fairness and justice. Contract faculty were unclear about how or why contracts were renewed and/or not renewed and some of them perceived non-renewal as punishment for speaking out. In this instance two contract faculty raised concerns about the relationship between departmental hiring practices and union advo-

cacy and representation. Black contract faculty perceived a relationship between departmental leaders and union representatives that worked to disadvantage them and to impede grievances and ultimately fairness. Contract faculty raised further concerns about their union but were reluctant to give further detail. In fact, Black contract faculty are wary of raising curriculum issues for fear of non-renewal. Additionally, contract faculty report a scholarly culture among students and tenured/pre-tenure stream faculty in which suggestions for adding more material on Black people are either diminished or dismissed outright.

Tenured and Pre-tenure Stream Faculty

Tenured and pre-tenure stream faculty carried huge burdens of mentoring students and developing avenues in their respective programs for Black students' success. For example, faculty were told that tensions and differential treatment between student program cohorts exist. It was explained that one cohort of students tends to be predominantly younger and whiter, while another cohort tends to be mature students who are primarily Black and/or racialized. The latter's wealth of experience and knowledge is often ignored, diminished and trivialized. The mature cohort are often returning for certification mandated by the ministry. Therefore, practices of mentoring the mature group were done informally because of hostility to centring Black scholarship and Black student experience in programs. When a singular faculty member who is not tenured is faced with challenging a department to do better, it is most likely that the faculty member would stand down in the face of hostility. The placing of tenure in jeopardy is a significant incentive to not rock the boat. And of course, Black tenure-stream faculty want to survive to

achieve tenure and stated in many different ways that obtaining tenure would enable them to have some decision-making power in their departments, an ability they felt they presently did not have. It is important to note that most of the Black faculty interviewed in the tenure-stream had recently arrived at Ryerson University. These faculty found their workloads to include, as previously mentioned, looking after the best educational interests of Black students beyond their classroom interaction with them. Black faculty noted that their official roles as scholars, teachers and advisors extended to significant emotional support for Black students they encountered. While not yet ready to move into leadership roles, these faculty mentioned that seeing Black faculty in leadership positions would enable formative change in their respective departments, an idea they felt strongly about.

Faculty Recommendations

1. Ryerson should design and/or enhance programs for recruiting Black faculty members across all its programs. Cluster hires and other group-based recruitment methods should be experimented with so that new Black faculty entering the university have a community that can be clearly identified.
2. Black faculty currently at Ryerson should be given support and resources to deepen, expand and experiment with new and innovative curriculum in Black Studies in their departments, programs and fields.
3. Contract lecturers, especially long-term ones should be made aware of the differences between CUPE and the RFA. Ryerson should work with contract academic staff to provide them with the tools and resources to apply for tenure track positions. This program should have clear and transparent guidelines for application.
4. Contract faculty should be given a clear sense of how and why their contracts are not renewed.



Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi (Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration and lead of the 2010 Taskforce on Anti-Racism, Ryerson University) and **Dr. Akua Benjamin** (Professor Emeritus and former Director, School of Social Work, Ryerson University) at Social Justice Week in 2019

Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion

The Office of the Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion (OVPECI) is a clear example of Ryerson's leadership in the higher education sector in Ontario. The office represents a long history of equity work at Ryerson and its stature as part of the highest governance and management at the university is seen by many as significant and important. The OVPECI appears to be a misunderstood office across the university among a number of constituencies. In particular, some staff seem unable to make a distinction between OVPECI and the Human Resources unit, while others are clearer about the role of OVPECI and its mandate. The office has a tremendous amount of support and indeed many see it as Ryerson's attempt to lead in the sector and set goals and standards that would genuinely entrench diversity and equity as foundational principles across the university.

However, it is necessary that OVPECI be given the resources that this office needs to achieve its stated goals. Many participants in the focus groups have the impression that OVPECI is not funded in the same way and at the same levels as other vice-president offices. This perception impedes the work that the office can do and achieve. Further, the confusion between the mandate of the OVPECI and the Human Resources unit is one that creates suspicion among some staff.

OVPECI Recommendations

1. The university should engage in a campaign that clarifies the mandate of OVPECI and the work it is intended to do on campus, distinguishing it from other units, specifically the Human Resources unit.

The distinction should be clear in terms of mandates, websites, policy jurisdiction and all functions that can be perceived as overlaps. The overall success of OVPECI will depend on both adequate investment and the building of this office as an integral part of the university, buttressed by a clarity about its mandate and policy reach.



Conclusion

If Black students, faculty and staff are to fully belong at Ryerson the successful implementation of the recommendations listed above will go a long way in making that possible. The OVPECI should be empowered to oversee the implementation of these recommendations. For the OVPECI to oversee the successful implementation of any or all of these recommendations the office would need to receive all the necessary resources to do the work. Indeed, it is imperative that the OVPECI be fully funded as the first step in this crucially important process. The OVPECI will need qualified personnel to accomplish the tasks that await it.

Ryerson stands to once again lead in this area of post-secondary education. As the first Ontario institution to put in place a Vice-President of Equity, Community and Inclusion, Ryerson has set a standard in the sector. Black students, faculty and staff believe in Ryerson's mission as a school committed to equity and diversity and

this process offers Ryerson the opportunity to demonstrate that commitment in a deep and sustained way. Across the three constituencies interviewed for this report there remained among them a loyalty and commitment to the promise of Ryerson as a place where equity and diversity as a social good can be positively experienced by Black individuals if the right policies, practices and procedures are put into place. Those who participated in this process fully expect to see change in the future, if not for themselves, but for those who will come after them. It is now up to Ryerson to tackle the issues outlined in this report and deliver on their wish for a different and indeed better future.

If you have any questions or require any additional information about Ryerson's Anti-Black Racism Climate Review, please email abr.review@ryerson.ca



Appendix I: Ryerson's first Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review underway

Article featured in Ryerson Today

Have your say: Black students, faculty and staff participate in process

Dayo Kefentse, March 29, 2019

In 2010, an Anti-Racism Task Force at Ryerson released a report outlining systemic issues and barriers. As the 10th anniversary of that report approaches, the ABR initiative is examining what is happening on campus with a specific focus on Ryerson's Black communities.

"It's fitting that we are doing this review at the same time as the United Nations is placing focus on people of African descent," said Dr. Denise O'Neil Green, vice-president, equity and community inclusion. "Our office addresses campus-wide systemic issues that affect the entire Ryerson community. As such, we are responding by supporting this campus review so we can understand how to foster a more inclusive campus for our Black students, faculty and staff."

Professor Dr. Rinaldo Walcott is continuing to conduct the review in April and May. Recognized as an international expert, his teaching and research is in the area of Black diaspora cultural studies and postcolonial studies with an emphasis on questions of sexuality, gender, nation, citizenship and multiculturalism.

"We know that ABR impacts students in particular ways, so we have created a safe space to share thoughts and concerns," said Walcott. "The Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review is qualitative and will focus on groups and conversations from people who self-identify as Black, as well as others in the Ryerson community."

"This climate review is important because of its ability to archive Black peoples' experiences on campus, put forward recommendations to address our historical, present, and future conditions," said Josh Lamers, Black Liberation Collective-Ryerson co-founder. "We encourage everyone at Ryerson who identifies as Black to participate."

During the recent Truth and Reconciliation Community Consultations, the Ryerson community learned the value of hearing from a cross-section of voices to get a sharper picture of what is happening on campus. In similar fashion, the ABR campus climate review will source multiple perspectives in an attempt to capture a detailed and accurate view of the conditions of Black communities at Ryerson. Once the review is complete, a report with recommendations and next steps will be presented to the university administration. The administration is committed to full transparency and that issues identified in the report will be addressed.

“At Ryerson we are working together to create a campus environment that is collegial, diverse, inclusive, equitable and supportive to ensure a strong sense of belonging and engagement for all,” said President Dr. Mohamed Lachemi. “We encourage our community members to take part in the review, I strongly believe that by seeking out and listening to a range of views, experiences and knowledge we greatly enrich our learning, teaching, research, and work environments.”

Rinaldo Walcott
(Consultant)

Rinaldo Walcott was the lead facilitator for Ryerson’s Anti-Black Racism Climate Review. He is a Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Director of Women and Gender Studies Institute. Rinaldo is also a member of the Graduate Program in Cinema Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Toronto. Recognized as an international expert, his teaching and research is in the area of Black diaspora cultural studies and postcolonial studies with an emphasis on questions of sexuality, gender, nation, citizenship and multiculturalism.



Appendix II: Summary of progress on 2010 Anti-Racism Taskforce Report recommendations

This chart provides a summary of the progress made to date of the recommendations from the 2010 Anti-Racism Taskforce Report.

There were a total of 59 sub-recommendations under 14 major areas, spanning from mission statement to campus climate, from senior administration to data collection.

Type of action	Number of recommendations	Percentage of recommendations
No action taken	7	11.9%
Action taken/in progress with adaptations from original recommendations	42	71.2%
Action taken specific to original recommendations	10	16.9%

For more information about Ryerson's
Anti-Black Racism Climate Review,
please email abr.review@ryerson.ca.

