



CASA LOMA CAMPUS
tel: 416.415.5000 ext. 4730 | fax: 416.415.4719
142 Kendal Avenue, room E100 | Toronto, ON Canada M5R 1M3

RYERSON CAMPUS SHE BUILDING
tel: 416.415.5000 ext. 4049 | fax: 416.415.4069
99 Gerrard Street East, room 614 | Toronto, ON Canada M5S 2K8

ST. JAMES CAMPUS
tel: 416.415.5000 ext. 2455 | fax: 416.415.2491
200 King Street East, room 147 | Toronto, ON Canada M5A 3W8

WATERFRONT CAMPUS
tel: 416.415.5000 ext. 5360
51 Dockside Drive, room 033 | Toronto, ON Canada M5T 2T9

July 23, 2020

To: President - Anne Sado

CC: VP Human Resources and Public Safety and Security - Leslie Quinlan
Director Diversity, Equity and Human Rights - Terry McQuaid

RE: Open Letter on College plans to eliminate racism at George Brown College

The Student Association of George Brown College continues to advocate for learning environments free from racism and calls on the college to create real change. Students' demands to end anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in our schools is not new. Yet, here we are again, with students calling for an end to Black violence – and college administrators not taking it up with the same urgency. Any demand wins have not come from the people in power's good intentions – but instead because Black and Indigenous communities fought for it. Together, the student movement contributes to a long history of demands. On Monday July 6, Director of Education & Equity met with George Brown College administrators: Terry McQuaid and Leslie Quinlan to get answers on how George Brown College plans to change. The answers were unsatisfying to the union representing GBC students. Students deserve to know what the college understands, what it values, and what it's willing to do to make change at George Brown College. Again, this is not new.

As recent as 2018, George Brown College enlisted a consulting firm to examine the college's anti-racism policies and practices, and responsibilities to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. The consultants' report findings were acknowledged as received by President Anne Sado in November 2019. Notably, over the years, GBC students have been involved in anti-racism campaigns, including the multi-year campaign to hire consultants. Yet, GBC has failed to demonstrate action. GBC has not demonstrated to students plans to implement recommendations from the report, nor tangible action plans with timelines to address anti-Black racism on campus. Anti-racism work requires ongoing and reflective work, and a commitment to challenging anti-Blackness at George Brown College. We the students are looking for those concrete commitments.

The Student Association presents the following demands to George Brown College:

1. Make available the complete Review of George Brown College Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism/Diversity

Make and keep information accessible. Prevent past work from being lost; prevent impeding progress. Such erasures have happened before. In 1990, GBC released a 'Race and Ethnic Relations Policy' developed by the Policy Working Group of the Multicultural Task Force. Progressive at the time, it was formally approved by the GBC Board of Governors. It contained a statement of principles and nine policy statements, complete with identified initiatives for each area toward eliminating racial barriers. Over time, the policy and any progress got buried. Such erasures of anti-racism commitments (and people's labour) cannot happen again. Such administrative disinterest sets progress back. Moreover, anti-racism is a shared struggle. There is a necessity to share resources to share in the work. As an educational institution it is important to share findings and learnings. It is the understanding that making the 2019 report public was a condition of the consultants' contract. We urge the college to broaden their limiting interpretation of "public." The report was not available to all. Unfortunately, the report was made available only to some GBC staff through password protected sign-in. Gatekeeping knowledge limits shared learning and advancement. Documenting anti-racist history and change is valuable work. **As such, we ask the college to post the FULL and COMPLETE "Review of George Brown College Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism/Diversity publicly to the GBC website."**

2. Status reports on implementation of the Review of George Brown College Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism/Diversity

Be open and communicative on change efforts. It's worrisome where the 2019 report noted that senior administrators did not actively support the report process as demonstrated by a lack of participation. This negatively impacted the potential of the report. Consultants specifically noted, "the lack of leadership and strong, viable, resourced corporate mandate to support this work." This points to a history, and current climate of inaction by the college on anti-racism work. The report was received by the college – but that is not the same as approving the report. College communications might say there are "several initiatives" underway – yet those initiatives go unnamed, and unspecified. If the college is taking action, those actions need to involve, and be communicated through students. Meaningful anti-racism work does not live on administrators' calendars and desks. Meaningful anti-racism work is measured by people, and those most impacted. It's important to be in dialogue towards building accountability and trust

relationships. **As such, we ask the college to detail its points of adoption or rejection of the report, and timelines on recommendations. As such, we ask the college announce plans to regularly report on the status of implementation both in writing and in-person to students.**

3. Establish and hire senior leadership positions for Truth and Reconciliation/ Indigenous Education, and senior leadership positions for Anti-Racism Education

Black and Indigenous students have expertise. But, the struggle against racism cannot be burdened solely by students. Students do the care work to survive and support themselves and each other as peers, and we appreciate how important (and hard) that can be. Students need their school to use its institutional power and privilege to prioritize anti-racism work. This includes resourcing and listening to critical perspectives that influence college decision-making. Students need to see Black and Indigenous leadership reflected in classrooms and decision-making roles. Anti-racism work cannot be exclusive or tokenized through a few advisory positions that don't have a direct line to the president. Similarly, equity cannot exist in only a few persons' portfolios. Demonstrated anti-racism skills is to be recognized as a core skill in all roles. The college has opportunity to decolonize hiring practices. Take the opportunity. **As such, we ask the college to increase hiring of Black and Indigenous staff in leadership positions.**

4. Establish an Office of Anti-Racism

One office for all human rights issues is not enough to meet students' needs. Too often, expansion plans mean reduced resources for all. Too often, name changes are performative only. If that one entry point for support is a bad experience – students can feel there is nowhere else to go in the future. If only one office is assigned responsibility to address anti-Black racism – then there is only one perspective offered to students – and there are no other GBC partners to collaborate on issues of anti-Black racism. This is limiting for students – and the potential of anti-racism work and change. **As such, we ask the college to establish an Office of Anti-Racism.**

5. Establish a GBC-wide Anti-Racism Council with involvement of faculty, students and staff

The struggle against racism cannot be left solely to students. Students do the care work to survive and support themselves and each other as peers, and we appreciate how important (and hard) that can be. Students need their school to use its institutional power and privilege to resource anti-racism work. This includes resourcing and listening to critical perspectives that influence college decision-making. Anti-racism work cannot be exclusive or token to few advisory or leadership positions. Anti-racism work cannot be achieved through closed committees, colonized committee structures, or inactive/irrelevant/unresponsive offices. GBC students, staff, and faculty are committed to anti-racism; those commitments are generous assets, not to be undermined. For instance, students, staff, and faculty previously initiated long-running anti-racism committees and initiatives. Such past commitments are to be recognized – not erased through formalization processes. **As such, the college needs to support and resource student anti-racism leadership, including meaningful participation and influence at decision-making levels, and meaningful supports and programming.**

6. Reopen the First Aid Offices, with a commitment to culturally competent care

Students need to be able to access health and safety on campus without fear. Students need to be able to access health and safety on campus that doesn't require security/police. Black and Indigenous students painfully know whose bodies are deserving of care and whose bodies (Black and Indigenous) are routinely denied care. Historically – and now – Black and Indigenous communities are subject to covert and overt racism. Historically – and now – Black and Indigenous peoples are victimized by police brutality. The institution of policing is rooted in violence, racism, and colonialism, and the institution of policing is not separate from the institution of schools. We look for transparency in college contracts and use of police. The college's closure of First Aid Offices impacts all students, with heightened impact to Black and Indigenous students. Of note, there is a great need for diverse and more entry points to accessing health and safety – not less. Now is not the time for the college to eliminate care from students. Moreover, the alternative to first aid – contacting campus security or police – is not an option. We're hopeful that the college can involve students and a transformative approach to crisis response and care. **As such, we ask for an immediate reopening of the First Aid Offices, restructured with a commitment to culturally competent care.**

7. Academic accommodations for grieving Black & Indigenous students

The impacts of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence, and the mounting Black and Indigenous lives lost due to violence is overwhelmingly accumulating on Black and Indigenous students. It is hard to learn through hurt, harms, and trauma (and anger). There is opportunity here to respond to what students need in ways that work for them. Such academic supports are in addition to the need for anti-racist curriculum and policy reviews. **As such, we ask for an immediate response to, and accessible options for Black and Indigenous students who may require academic accommodations due to community mourning and grieving.**

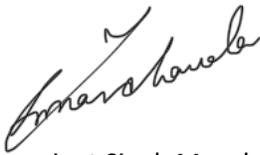
8. Condemn injustices for what they are – systemic and targeted anti-Black racism

We call on the college to condemn injustices for what they are – systemic and targeted anti-Black racism. Students will no longer accept euphemisms over actions. Name white supremacy, instead of the euphemism of “difficult times.” Look for how existing policies and practices uphold white supremacy. Challenge it. **Name it.**

On behalf of the students of George Brown College, we look to the college to take immediate and necessary measures to respond to the needs of students toward dismantling anti-Black racism.

While we acknowledge GBC’s efforts to date, we are committed to ongoing advocacy on this matter and will continue to share and amplify the concerns of our students.

Signed, **In Solidarity**



Taranjeet Singh Manchanda (He/Him)

Director of Education and Equity

Student Association of George Brown College

direducationequity@sagbc.ca