

Action Plan Addressing Anti-Black Racism

The Department of Cinema and Media Arts expresses our solidarity with Black Lives Matter and reiterates our commitment to racial and social justice as well as an anti-oppression framework. Specifically, we recognize that anti-Black racism is inextricably linked to colonialism and to the systems of power which also perpetuate the marginalization of Indigenous peoples, and we recognize that the Department of Cinema and Media Arts is also not exempt from complicity in this culture of racism and these systems of power.

We commit to developing a serious and sustained action plan that builds on the initiatives and recommendations of colleagues and students. The action plan is intended to be organic, dynamic and open to ongoing revision, expansion and sustained reflection.

In the immediate future:

1. We will begin by listening in order for us to fully understand the experiences of our students. The departmental executive will begin exploring processes that will reach out to both current students as well as alumni. In our outreach, our focus will be on anti-Black racism within a larger framework of race, representation and combatting racism in all aspects of the student experience at York.
2. BIPOC students/alums will be invited to provide responses and input to this Action Plan. If they choose, further involvement could include such student-led initiatives as a BIPOC student caucus, a BIPOC student advisory committee that works with the Executive/Chair and/or possible BIPOC student participation in departmental committees.
3. Building on this feedback, departmental retreats will be held to evolve a plan to orient curricular and learning objectives around anti-Black racism and within the context of an anti-racist and decolonial framework. We will create new courses and pedagogic approaches across all our programmes which will prioritize the cinemas, expertise and practices of Black and Indigenous filmmakers, media artists and scholars, and explore histories and practices of anti-racist cinemas.
4. Over the past decade faculty in the Department have made a conscious effort to diversify our student body at both the undergraduate and graduate level. We acknowledge that we still have a ways to go. We also recognize that the numbers of Black students remain low. We commit ourselves to working with the recruitment officers in the Dean's office to do focused outreach and active recruitment of Black students.
5. The Department will initiate a series of workshops for faculty on unconscious bias in co-ordination with the York University Office of Affirmative Action, Equity and Inclusivity.

6. We support the calls of the Joint Subcommittee on Employment Equity and Inclusivity for Six Targeted Hires over the course of the current collective agreement and advocate for a cluster of Black and Indigenous hires within AMPD. The Department also commits to making the hiring of Black and Indigenous scholars, filmmakers and media artists a top priority.
7. While acknowledging that York University does have a Centre for Human Rights, we also support the call from the York Federation of Students and the York University Graduate Student Association for the introduction of a separate university-wide reporting process for incidents of Racism and Discrimination.
<http://yugsa.ca/a-collective-letter-to-rhonda-lenton/>

Year 1: Fall and Winter 2020/2021:

8. The Department will host online guest lectures and screenings by Black filmmakers.
9. The Archive/Counter-Archive research consortium will apply for a MITACS post-doctoral position in Black cultural history and media.
10. The Department will seek a donor for a scholarship/prize for BIPOC graduate students.
11. The Department will advocate for a titled/endowed visiting scholar position for scholars specializing in critical race and decolonial Cinema and Media Studies.
12. The Department will engage in the ongoing mentoring of BIPOC students.

Year II: In 2021/2022 and going forward we commit to working on the following initiatives:

13. A weekend conference/festival/symposium on Black Canadian filmmaking potentially co-presented with Archive/Counter-Archive and the Regent Park Film Festival featuring Toronto-based Black filmmakers.
14. The Department will seek funding for a three-week summer workshop for local Black high school students. The workshop director will be selected from a pool of qualified Black scholars and/or filmmakers. The workshop will continue working relations with partners from the Regent Park Film Festival and those in the Jane/Finch community as well as with CineSpace.
15. The Department will seek to host an annual Black/Indigenous Artist-in-Residence (one- year fellowship appointment).
16. The Department will continue to facilitate sessions with students to receive feedback and to review/update/revise this action plan.