

## FHS Anti-Racism Task Force Meeting #1- Minutes

Location: Zoom

Date: September 15, 2020

Attendees: Twelve committee members.

Time: 8.45 – 9.45 am

### I. **Introductions:** Who are we & what brought us to the Task Force?

Treena Orchard (Faculty); Anita Kothari (Faculty); David Howe (Faculty); Andrew Johnson (Faculty); Neciula de Paula Carneiro Porto G (Post-Doctoral Student); Denise Kamyuka (Graduate Student), Chizoba Oriuwa (Alumni); Jacob Taylor (Alumni); Elaine D’Agostino (Undergraduate Student); Olubukola Sonibare (Graduate Student); Nicole Kaniki (Staff); and Wendy Latimer (Staff). We are united in our desire to address racism within the FHS and Western University culture more broadly. Two of our members were on the President’s Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG). We can learn a great deal from their experiences and some of the challenges they encountered on the working group. One key challenge was the divergence from anti-Black racism to a focus on more diverse racial experiences.

### II. **Issues & Goals:** What key issues related to anti-racism do we want to address within FHS? Are there specific racialized experiences we want to explore?

The primary aims and outcomes of the ARWG were provided, including its focus on racism among several groups on campus (i.e., Black, Indigenous, Muslim, Jewish, South Asian). This was followed by a discussion about what our goals should be. What is our focus, and who does our work include? The issue of the hierarchy of oppression was raised, specifically the problems associated with lumping together the experiences of diverse racialized groups. We might consider prioritizing our focus by targeting our work with those considered to occupy the ‘bottom’, which could generate the most pronounced structural change. Kimberle’ Crenshaw’s pioneering theory of intersectionality was also discussed, which accounts for the ways in which race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” with one another and overlap (<https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>).

The specific kinds of racism and racialized experiences we want to focus on is undetermined, but the sense is that it must include Black and perhaps also Indigenous experiences. It is delicate to make these selections, especially during our first meeting and in full view of one another. Feedback from members is encouraged (send any and all thoughts to me), and we will come to this decision soon. It’s imperative that we do because it shapes our organization, purpose, and activities in every way.

The President’s Special Advisors Group on Racism (AGR) will be implementing many of the recommendations from the ARWG, including the establishment of committees like ours and AGR representatives in each faculty or school. Our work may be led by some of their recommendations. But we also want to engage in efforts that reflect the particular needs of our faculty. As one of the first faculties to take on the anti-racism work, we have an opportunity to lead our peers and also influence the AGR. This is exciting!

Curriculum was raised repeatedly as a fruitful place to begin making change. Mandatory courses and new classes that can be taught across the Faculty were raised. It was suggested that we might start with our Methods courses, which are undergoing review in the School of Health Studies (SHS). We can ensure that each SHS, and maybe FHS, student is required to take a course in qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods that includes not only the 'issue' of race but the work of racialized scholars and others who use their research design, analysis, and dissemination strategies. Undertaking a deep curriculum review and attendant recommendations regarding the issue of race is something else that we may wish to follow through with.

III. **Collecting Data:** How do we want to gather insights from our committee and FHS, staff and students?

What we collect is determined by our goals, which are in the process of being articulated. One member commented on the make-up of the Faculty, from her days as a student, specifically that the students are diverse but it gets markedly less so among staff and faculty. This is still very much the case and because we have one of the most diverse student demographics our work is extra pressing. One of the first things we should do is an environmental scan of the Faculty to gather diversity data, along with how FHS is administered (with the part-time position can help with).

Along with collecting Task Force-specific data, changing our culture is essential. It first requires widespread acknowledgement that racism exists in our classrooms and hallways. Without this, anti-racism and EDI work will continue to be siloed and perceived, by our colleagues and perhaps some students, as merely "a project" or something that "she does" and that "doesn't impact my research or teaching." The example of EDI requirements in many tri-council grants was raised, which might help with information uptake and the structural shifts that must occur to make FHS safer, more welcoming, and a more reflexive place to learn, work, and grow.

IV. **Admin. Support:** What we would like the part-time position to look like? Research or Diversity & Inclusion expertise?

It might be best to have someone who can assist with data collection *and* has targeted EDI training. I forgot to mention in the meeting that FHS has hired a new social media person, who can also help with our work to a certain degree. Our Dean supports this, which is great!

V. **Our Roles:** Leadership structure and our individual roles

We didn't get too far on this, but it's important to share the leadership wealth on the committee. I'm happy to continue doing loads of the work but think it's vital to join forces with another member or two. It was suggested that we could divide our tasks into groups, with the faculty members undertaking some of the policy and curriculum work and maybe students (and alumni) could focus on tertiary, student-facing initiatives- which have yet to be fully determined. Talking to one another on the regular and offering ideas on each other's respective tasks would also take place too.

VI. **Wrap Up:** Action items & next steps

From our discussion, these might be suitable action items:

- 1) ***Our specific focus***- Anti-Black racism? Anti-Black and Indigenous racism? Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) racism?
- 2) ***Our Mission/Mandate***- what do we want to accomplish, in terms of specific tasks and our vision?
- 3) ***Curriculum Development***- what courses or modules do we want to develop (i.e., SHS methods, FHS classes, Kinesiology?) and who wants to spearhead these tasks?
- 4) ***Student-facing initiatives***- what kinds of activities can our student members attend to?
- 5) ***Roles and Leadership***-How do we see ourselves facilitating our work together? Any roles or specific tasks you're interested in?
- 6) ***Next Meeting***- Mid-October?