



Master of Museum Studies Student Association (MUSSA)

Faculty of Information, University of Toronto

mussa.ischool@gmail.com | mussa.ca | @mussauoft

Museum Studies Town Hall on Anti-Racism Actions

Thursday, July 2, 2020

- **Moderator:** Jodie Glean, Director, Antiracism & Cultural Diversity Office, University of Toronto
- **Purpose of the Town Hall:** Ways in which the MMSt program can advance + extend its work to commit to anti-racism and be more inclusive to all

- Setting in context of recent events, experiences of discrimination, history of colonialism
- Discussion guidelines:
 - Respectful dialogue
 - Take care of yourself
 - Confidentiality

- **Goals:**
 - Engage in discussion on manifestations and impacts of anti-Black racism on students, staff, faculty
 - Garner suggestions and feedback on MMSt action planning to address anti-Black racism to integrate antiracism and equity principles throughout the program
 - Provide a summary of the recommendations to senior leadership for review and action planning purposes

- Solidarity is not the same as Support - bell hooks
 - To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs, and goals around which to unite
 - Solidarity requires sustained ongoing commitment

- **Discussion**
 - What comes to mind when we think of:
 - Racism in Canada
 - Anti-Black racism in Canada
 - Museum Studies and Anti-Black racism
 - Participant suggestions:
 - Canada is often seen as doing “better than” the United States in terms of Anti-Black racism
 - Notion of whiteness, eurocentrism, white supremacy
 - In addition to thinking through some of the concrete “next steps,” folks need to think through the culture shift + change in values that is needed in order for the action plan to be effective

- **Key Definitions**

- Anti-Black Racism: prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, 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
- Anti-Indigenous Racism: ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injutive experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Canada
 - Includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain, and perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies
- From the City of Toronto, Community Conversations Guide website

- **Overall Thoughts & Examination of Proposed Actions**

- What specific aspects of the Museum Studies Program could benefit from an anti-racism approach? Explain why.
 - Think of our mandatory courses, orientation experience, individual interactions with faculty/staff - what would we have liked to see?
- Individual Faculty & Staff
 - Proposed Actions:
 - Augment BIPOC content: authorship, case studies, etc.
 - Participate in antiracism, anti-oppression, and cultural competency trainings
 - Suggestions/Feedback:
 - Student: examining WHO we are reading (the authors)
 - Alum: examples outside of North American/European museums
 - Student: training on facilitating discussions in the classroom
 - Student: revision of hiring practices
- Program
 - Suggestions:
 - Alum: How can students be part of decolonizing in their future workplaces
 - Student: Difficult Heritages course is a good example of content and discussions
 - Alum: How students perceive Indigenous content might not always fit in with typical “academic” approaches - be flexible in what is considered “authoritative” or “expert” content
 - Student: Course dealing with racism and oppression should be mandatory
 - Alum: Diversity and Inclusion Committee used to exist, but work also shouldn’t fall only on students
 - Proposed Actions:
 - Incorporate mandatory antiracism training for all MMSt & CDP students in core courses

- Permanent Faculty hire in the area of DEI and Museums/GLAM
- Reorganize existing funds to make paid internships for all students
- Provide matching funds to under-funded cultural institutions committed to DEI values and practices, to hire our interns
- Feedback:
 - Student: there should be more than one BIPOC faculty member hired permanently (if only one, it can be toxic for them)
 - Student: This would alleviate a lot of stress among students looking for internships
 - Student: Unpaid makes internship feel unreachable
 - Student: Can we document discrimination that has occurred at workplaces during internships to avoid placing students there in future
 - Student: ensure students are able to feel comfortable in reporting discrimination
 - Faculty: noted on this as an area to strengthen support for students
 - Alum: creating “safe spaces” for BIPOC students/future staff as part of the program planning
 - Student: more visibility around the amount that students get from the Faculty when taking on unpaid internships
 - Student: the stipend is not sufficient for living costs in Toronto
 - Faculty: develop strategies for museums to become effective catalysts of cultural/social/economic transformations within the larger society - change internal culture to help staff be more effective in fostering change across communities
 - Faculty: “Brave Spaces” from Denise Green at Ryerson
 - Student: don’t centre anti-racism work around one week or one course - bring up antiracist and anti-colonial perspectives throughout all course work
- Academic Faculty
 - Suggestions:
 - Wendy question: In consideration of the fact that there are only 4 permanent hires in the Museum Studies program, does diversifying staff within the rest of the Faculty also serve MMSt students?
 - Students: Faculty-wide issue; diversify the iSchool as a whole; still need MMSt-specific BIPOC hire; Faculty members across iSchool need to hold each other accountable for the language they are using; change in MI might not be felt within MMSt (MMSt students don’t often take MI courses); acknowledgement from Faculty of their own gaps in knowledge and willingness to accept differing expertise/experience of diverse students

- Alum: MMSt can make changes without relying on the iSchool (but whole Faculty needs to change); diversity can be reflected in professors etc. and not just within permanent Faculty
- Proposed Actions:
 - Faculty-wide hire of a senior staff member to lead the transformation around DEI at the Faculty
 - Targeted scholarships for BIPOC students
 - Hire an external consultant (or equivalent) to conduct diversity audits and collect data to record changes and impact
 - Diversify recruitment and admissions to admit more BIPOC students
- Feedback:
 - Anti-racism workshops need to be more than reading information in a PPT
- **Questions for ongoing reflection and action planning:**
 - What is MMSt's responsibility to interrupt this reality?
 - What does resistance look like? What strategies are needed to mitigate resistance when it arises?
 - What does support look like for this plan? What strategies are needed to ensure the appropriate supports are in place?
- Jodie and Prof. Krmpotich to review feedback from this Town Hall to determine next steps