

WHEREAS, the DSU wishes to express love and concern for Katie George-Jim and Masuma Khan and all marginalized people on our campus, in a time when our university is failing us and needs to better support students.

BE IT RESOLVED, the DSU will release the following statement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the DSU will draft an Issues Policy drawn from this statement and present it to Council for adoption.

We Stand with Racialized and Indigenous Students

Two Dalhousie University students, Kati George-Jim and Masuma Khan, are under attack – and more broadly, Indigenous women, Muslim women, and racialized women are under attack. We support and work in solidarity with Kati and Masuma. We write to express love and concern for them and all marginalized people on our campus, in a time when our university is failing us and needs to better support students.

Over the past few months, the Dalhousie administration prioritized a senseless disciplinary process against Masuma Khan, instead of ensuring her safety and well-being. Masuma made a public statement condemning white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and Dalhousie University responded by suggesting that her comment might “cause another person to feel demeaned, intimidated, or harassed”, as written in the Code of Student Conduct (Appendix A). By choosing to pursue the disciplinary process, the university subjected Masuma to harassment, sexual violence, and death threats, all of which are breaches of the Code of Student Conduct. All the while, taking no action to hold students and community members accountable for perpetrating violence against Masuma.

On October 19, 2017, Kati George-Jim made a public statement on the continued silencing of Indigenous women based on her experience on the Dalhousie Board of Governors. Kati has yet to receive an official apology for the Board’s racist practice. Instead, the Board Chair’s response was to: deny the existence of racism on the Board of Governors, fail to acknowledge systemic racism and colonialism in post-secondary governance, and invalidate Kati’s lived experience.

Women, trans and non-binary people-of-colour are often at the forefront of movements working to dismantle systemic oppression and marginalization. Recent events demonstrate the backlash that women-of-colour receive for speaking out about their lived experiences. Repercussions for public advocacy are amplified for racialized and Indigenous women, based on the intersecting identities they hold. We deeply care about the well-being, academic careers, safety, and futures of our racialized and Indigenous students.

We call on Dalhousie University to formally apologize for their actions. Dalhousie has prioritized time and resources on bureaucratic processes that uphold racist and colonial institutional policies, instead of supporting and protecting racialized and Indigenous students on our campuses. For years, racialized and Indigenous students have been calling on the university to act on issues of systemic racism. If Dalhousie is committed to actualizing Strategic Priority 5.2

(Appendix B), to “foster a collegial culture grounded in diversity and inclusiveness,” it needs to take direction from its students and act immediately. Masuma and Kati are loud and clear: racialized and Indigenous students have a right to safety, a right to express their truths and speak openly about issues that adversely affect them, and a right to demand better from our institution.

We demand that Dalhousie University hold itself accountable for its actions and commit to supporting racialized and Indigenous students now and in the future by meeting fully the following recommendations:

1. Issue a public written apology from the Dalhousie Board of Governors, Dalhousie Senate, and Dalhousie administration to Kati George-Jim and Masuma Khan on the impacts of their actions.
2. Release and make public the number and demographic data of students who've accessed, been penalized, and disciplined through the Senate Discipline Committee.
3. Initiate an external investigation into Dalhousie's disciplinary process against Masuma where the findings are made public and that Dalhousie Student Union and King's Students' Union are involved in task force member appointments.
4. Strike a committee to re-examine the Code of Student Conduct and put forward recommendations for the university's implementation. This committee should contain a majority of members who are racialized and Indigenous, including: students to be elected by the Dalhousie Student Union and King's Students' Union, faculty to be elected by the Dalhousie Faculty Association, and community members with expertise on critical race theory.
5. Reinstate the fourth student representative on the Dalhousie Board of Governors and designate that seat to a racialized and/or Indigenous student.
6. Increase funding, resources, and personnel for the Ombudsperson and the Dalhousie Student Advocacy Service to increase its capacity to support students accessing and navigating university processes.
7. Allocate part of the Strategic Initiatives Fund for programs and initiatives dedicated to racialized and Indigenous communities. These may include but are not limited to, public lectures and events, funding for closed-spaces for students, and dedicated staff and faculty positions for racialized and Indigenous people. Funding must include adequate financial support and physical space on campus for Sister 2 Sister, a program that brings together racialized and Indigenous femme students. This program is currently operating with an insufficient budget of \$300 for the entire year.

8. Implement the recommendations of the Committee on Aboriginal and Black African Canadian Student Access and Retention to:
 - Create an Aboriginal Student Advising Centre and Advisor;
 - Create two new coordinators to support access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal and Black/African Canadian students;

9. Increase funding, resources, and personnel for Dalhousie Counselling Services for the purpose of creating culturally appropriate and representative mental health services to address the needs of racialized and Indigenous students. Funding must be allocated to hire at least one new racialized counsellor and one new Indigenous counsellor. Dalhousie University must also strike a committee to conduct a review of Counselling Services for racialized and Indigenous students, which will review how funds are spent and hold recommendations accountable. This committee will contain a majority of members who are racialized and Indigenous students and faculty democratically elected by the Dalhousie Student Union, King's Students' Union, and Dalhousie Faculty Association.

10. Join students to lobby the government for more needs-based bursaries and grants, increased funding to post-secondary education, and reduced tuition fees, in recognition that tuition fees limit access to post-secondary education with disproportionate impact on racialized and Indigenous communities.

Your Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) is committed to facilitating these conversations. This is the first year in its history that the majority of the DSU executive are racialized people, which is indicative of for whom systems of leadership are designed, even within student spaces. We are committed to prioritizing issues of racism and colonialism on campus. These conversations are difficult, but they are not new. We have committed to advocating for the above actions and we commit ourselves to facilitate conversations and opportunities for learning. We encourage everyone to step forward and join us in working towards a more equitable campus.

In solidarity,

Amina Abawajy, President
Chantal Khoury, VP Finance and Operations
Masuma Khan, VP Academic and External
Alex Hughes, VP Internal
Cory Larsen, VP Student Life

Reference List

DiAngelo, R. (2011). White Fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3).

Appendix A

Dalhousie University Code of Student Conduct, Section C1F.

C. Offences

1. Offences Against Persons

- (f) No student shall engage in unwelcome or persistent conduct that the student knows, or ought to reasonably know, would cause another person to feel demeaned, intimidated or harassed. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:
- i. following another person, or anyone known to that person;
 - ii. unwanted communication with another person or anyone known to that person;
 - iii. watching the residence or place of work of another person or anyone known to that person;
 - iv. threatening another person or any member of the family, friends or colleagues of the other person; coercing, enticing or inciting a person to commit an act that is humiliating or demeaning to that other person or to others.

For full text, please visit:

https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/CodeofStudentConduct.pdf

Appendix B

Dalhousie University Strategic Priorities – Section 5.2 (from Dal.ca website)

5.2 Foster a collegial culture grounded in diversity and inclusiveness

EXECUTIVE SPONSOR: President

PROJECT LEAD: Jasmine Walsh, AVP Human Resources and Michelle Williams, Senior Instructor Faculty of Law and Director Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq

Initiative STATUS (June 2017):

- Development and launch of Diversity and Inclusiveness Strategy
- Be Counted Census completed, with 88% of full-time and permanent part-time employees taking part; faculty response rate in DFA increased by 11.4%, in nonunion increased by 26.1%, in Medicine increased by 21.5% and in NSGEU non-faculty increased by 25.2%
- Be Counted Census shows that representation of racially visible employees increased from 8.3% to 11% and representation of Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities and self-identified LGBTQ showed moderate increases
- Be Counted Census labour market comparison and gap analysis shows that representation of women in middle management positions improved from -4.2 to full representation; representation of women in professorships declined from -8.5 to -11.4; representation of racially visible persons improved from -100.7 to -54; representation of Indigenous persons improved from -25.8 to -11.0; and gaps present in representation of persons with disabilities in clerical, trades and sales and service are still present
- Employment equity training provided to all senior admin and to academic and admin unit search committees
- Indigenous Student Centre expanded
- Mi'kmaq flag raised on Studley and Agricultural Campuses
- Marcus Garvey Pan-African flag raised to honour African Heritage Month
- Introduction of Graduation Regalia including medicine pouches at convocation for Indigenous graduates and kente sash for African Canadian graduates
- Under the university's strategic initiative on diversity and inclusiveness, a Mace Re-Visioning committee has been struck to rethink and commission the university mace, currently used during Convocation and Induction ceremonies, with the competition process underway to find a symbol that will better reflect the true history of Nova Scotia and Dalhousie University and represent all members of the Dalhousie community
- Faculty of Medicine created an Indigenous Health Program aimed at recruitment and retention of Indigenous students in medicine
- Faculty of Law created a first-year course on Aboriginal and Indigenous Law aimed at responding directly to the TRC Calls to Action
- Faculty of Agriculture initiatives to improve connections with local First Nations communities and increase recruitment and retention of Aboriginal Students included hiring a full-time Manager, Aboriginal Students; connecting Community Education Officer to educational programming in First Nations communities; and establishing External Advisory Council to engage local leaders in campus programming
- Appointment of Student Ombudsperson

For full text, visit:

<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/leadership-and-vision/dalforward/strategic-direction.html>

