



November 19, 2020

To:

Santee Smith, Chancellor;
Board of Governors;
David Farrar, McMaster President and Vice Chancellor;
Susan Tighe; Provost;
Sean Van Koughnett, Associate Vice-President & Dean of Students;
McMaster University's Equity and Inclusion Office;
Jeremiah E. Hurley, Dean of Social Sciences

This letter is responding to the statement released on June 1, 2020 by McMaster that expressed solidarity with Black community members and outrage at the murder of George Floyd. Like the University, we are outraged by recent cases of police brutality and institutional racism that so deeply pervade our daily lives. The needless death of Regis Korchisnki-Paquet in Toronto on May 27th displays that Canadians also suffer under the clutches of police brutality and anti-black racism.

We write this letter to echo some of McMaster's concerns, while also holding University leadership to account in its pledge to expand services and initiatives to further support Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) students, faculty, and staff. It is imperative that the University move on from PR statements and be specific about its plans of action. Below are five supports that we believe can be readily applied over the Summer term.

We applaud McMaster's support of subcommittees such as the Race, Racism, and Racialization (R3) Working Group and associated programming of regular group discussion and support group meetings for BIPOC community members. However, we call upon the University to expand these efforts. Like in many cases of hate-crimes and targeted violence, public institutions of higher learning will express concern, outrage, and share in the wider societal outpouring of expressions of online solidarity. As the news cycle once again retreats, we must not return to business as usual. To counter racism, we ask that the following supports be pursued by University leadership, with ongoing consultation from student organizations:

First, that the University specify its language of solidarity, beginning with immediate and public support for Black Lives Matter. We are disappointed to see that the University's statement on June 1 did not do this. As the leading human rights organization in exposing police brutality, racial profiling, and denouncing anti-black racism, publicly supporting Black Lives Matter is a clear first step in the struggle against white supremacy.

Second, we call upon the University to specify its condemnation of white supremacy and anti-black racism in all its forms. Canadian universities have been complicit in allowing white supremacist values and organizations to hold public forum and expand their recruitment under the guise of "free speech." To provide a venue of truly safe and empowering learning with legitimate exercise of anti-racist pedagogy, McMaster must be specific in denouncing groups that advance racist ideas.



Third, we demand that the University provide substantive support in the form of expanded financial assistance and scholarships for BIPOC students. Beyond existing private endowments that may finance these scholarships, the University itself must stand behind progressive forms of financial support with internal University awards for BIPOC student researchers from all disciplines. Financial support is a direct action that leads to long-term benefits for students, communities, and the University.

Fourth, it is imperative that the University offer expanded access to anti-racist pedagogical training for all student Teaching Assistants and faculty in order to guarantee that classrooms are safely managed.

Fifth, we demand that former Chief of Hamilton Police, Glenn De Caire, have his contract terminated. Given his public support of carding, it is unquestionable that his role at McMaster, as the Director of Parking and Security Services, runs counter to the University statement released on June 1. We also call on the University to sever relations with all forms of policing to ensure the safety and well-being of our community, including those among us who have been made most vulnerable.

In this pivotal moment for racial justice, we invite all student organizations and academic departments to hold our leadership to account in advancing an explicitly anti-racist University culture. When peaceful demonstrations are targeted by extrajudicial police action and threatened by a military presence, there is a responsibility by Universities to condemn those actions unequivocally. In a time of unprecedented attacks on BIPOC communities by police and racist organizations, McMaster must act from its position as a leading institution of higher learning in the struggle against institutional racism.

Signed,

Graduate Student Association