

Ryerson University Demands

Dear President Sheldon Levy & Provost Mohamed Lachemi,

On Wednesday, November 18, 2015 a coalition of Black students from across campus held an action in solidarity with Black students at Missouri University and Yale University. These students are committed to challenging the violent and pervasive accounts of anti-Black racism on their campuses. Inspired by their ongoing struggle and in recognition of our solidarity we must ALL work to challenge the realities of anti-Black racism here at Ryerson University. The Black on Campus Coalition worked to collect and highlight stories shared from members of the community through a rally, banner drop and social media action.

These stories highlighted pressing issues for Black folks here at Ryerson such as feelings of isolation, underrepresentation and fear.

As such, the Black on Campus Coalition is making the following seven demands of our university administration:

1. In solidarity with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, **we demand** the university administration launch a process to rename the university and remove the statue of Egerton Ryerson. While Egerton Ryerson is celebrated for his contributions to Ontario education system, often overlooked is the role that he played in the creation of the residential school system. In recognition of the devastating generational impacts that the residential school system has had on First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities we believe that the university must begin a process to rename our university, prioritizing consultations with the Mississauga's of the New Credit First Nations, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe.

2. In recognition of the fact that tuition fees limit access to post-secondary education which disproportionately impacts Black communities, **we demand** that the university administration commit to joining students in a call for more funding to post-secondary education and support the call for a universal reduction to tuition fees. Additionally, we demand that the university administration introduce more targeted grants, bursaries and scholarships to support access to education for Black students. Post-secondary education has long been considered to be the greatest social equalizer, capable of opening new pathways to economic and social mobility for the most marginalized members of our society. However, the growing income divide coupled with dramatic increases to tuition fees has put post-secondary education out of reach for too many members of our community. Tuition fees are cited as the number one barrier for high school students interested in attending post-secondary education. Canada's growing income inequality divide along the lines of race and ethnicity means that the people that are most impacted by these economic barriers will inevitably be low- and middle-income Black communities.

3. **We demand** that Ryerson University create and enforce a comprehensive racial awareness and inclusion curriculum throughout all campus departments, mandatory for all students, faculty, staff and administration. This curriculum must be vetted, maintained, and overseen by a standing committee of Senate comprised of Racialised students, staff and faculty.

4. **We demand** that by the academic year 2017-2018 Ryerson University increase the percentage of Black tenured faculty, upper administration and full-time staff by ten percent.

5. **We demand** that Ryerson University expand the number of core courses offered that speak to the histories, experiences and realities of Black and Racialised communities to be taught by tenured Black and Racialised faculty.

6. **We demand** that Ryerson University stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter-Toronto which is a diverse coalition of Black people working to challenge systemic violence and racism that targets Black people, particularly in our interactions with police and authority figures. Further, we demand that Ryerson University provide a donation to the coalition to support their ongoing organizing efforts.

7. **We demand** that the university administration restructure the Ryerson Black History Awareness Committee to be comprised solely of Black faculty, staff and students.

Over the last several years, we have seen a growing commitment to the principles of equity as a response to organizing by students, staff and faculty on campus. For example, we saw creation of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as a response to the Task Force on Campus Racism (2010). While we view this as a major step forward, we believe that there is still a lot of work to be done.

These demands are essential to progressing our university forward, strengthening our commitment to equity and ensuring that all students on campus feel safe and welcomed in an institution that is dedicated to communal support. Ryerson University must make a commitment to acknowledge its ongoing racist practices that have contributed to the violence and trauma faced by black people on our campus for the purpose of profit and upholding its investment in white supremacy.

We hope that you receive these demands in good faith and urgency. We look forward to hearing from you to setup a meeting to discuss how you will implement strategies based on our demands. We will continue to take action to ensure that these issues do not go unnoticed.

With love and resilience,

Black on Campus Coalition (Ryerson)

