

Issues and Challenges: A Commitment to Antiracism

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I'd like to provide you with some thoughts about the King's-Brescia Antiracism Working Group (K-B ARWG) and about anti-racism generally at King's. There are four points I'd like to address and challenges I would like to propose.

Self-education & Self-awareness.

As you well know, the Black Lives Matter movement reached a new level of visibility globally in 2020. For many, myself included, it created a significant level of awareness of my own ignorance around issues of racism and oppression. As a result, I began to read and listen. The more I read and listened, of course, the more aware I became of my own lack of depth in understanding of the issues that surround me daily. The notion that one is not racist if you do not explicitly hate and act on that hate simply because of the colour of an individual's skin is a common and simplistic perspective held by many in the white community. My view is that racism is not an either/or calculus but a continuum from blissful ignorance to overt hate and violence. Reading, research, and subsequently developing new insights are the fundamental activities and outcome components of universities – ignorance is anathema to what we do.

Challenge: For each of us to select, at minimum, one book, one article, or one podcast from the Cardinal Carter Library's [Indigenous Studies guide](#), or from the BLM's [Canadian Reading List](#) to use as a means to audit and understand our individual awareness of racism in our community.

Institutional Education/Training.

While each of us has responsibility to self-educate, King's University College also has an obligation as a 'learning institution' to provide education/training opportunities to enhance each individual's awareness of racism on campus and in the community in which we live and serve. This includes the development of policies and procedures regarding hiring practices, promotion & tenure, access to resources, and the right to live and work in a culture of respect and dignity.

Challenge: For King's provide resources to our community on a regular basis to understand racism and to act to combat it.

Leadership.

In order for the work of the K-B ARWG to become part of our collective culture (shared values) and campus practices, it must be constantly reinforced by all those in positions of leadership and power. To coin the phrase, leadership 'needs to walk the walk and talk the talk' if we really want to make significant changes in the diversity and decency of our campuses.

Challenge: For leaders to become cognisant of the landscape of racism and to be proactive in raising awareness, consistently speaking out, and taking action.

Permanency of the ARWG.

It is critically important to our campus culture and to the level of trust the community places in us to be true to our stated values:

the need to undertake initiatives to promote social justice; to redress historical injustices that have resulted in marginalization and discrimination; to improve access to higher education for historically disadvantaged individuals and communities; to speak “uncomfortable truths” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae) about the nature and origins of the problems of our time; and to promote the ethical use and equitable sharing of the world’s resources.

The KB-ARWG has and must continue to provide strategy, resources, comment, and criticism in order for us to move to the level of equity, diversity, and inclusion that we all genuinely seek but may not at the moment know how to achieve.

Challenge: For King’s and Brescia to make the K-B ARWG a permanent structure with dedicated resources and support to ensure its success.