THE FORGOTTEN LINK:
HOW STUDENTS OF COLOUR GET LEFT BEHIND
IN THE MOVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Created by: Victoria Rodney and Fiqir Worku
The land we are standing on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Territorial Land Acknowledgement
OVERVIEW

- Interactive Activity
- Key terms
- Social Determinants of Health
- Physiological Impacts of Perceived Racism
- Psychological Impacts of Perceived Racism
- How does racism impact the well-being of students?
- The eRACEr report
- What we did to address this on our campus
Interactive Activity
KEY TERMS

- Racialized: process of ascribing a race/ethnicity to a group that did not identify itself as such (Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, 1995).

- BIPOC: black and indigenous people of colour

- Determinants of Health: factors that can contribute to the state of one's health or wellbeing (Mikonnen & Raphael, 2010).

- Racism: system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on race, that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities and advantages others (Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, 1995).

- Intersectionality: A term coined by civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw. The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1994).
Social Determinants of Health

- Disability
- Income and Income Distribution
- Early Childhood Development
- Education
- Employment and Working Conditions
- Food Insecurity
- Gender
- Race
- Social Exclusion
- Indigenous Status

(Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010)
How did we get involved with social action for racial justice?
The effects of racism are far-reaching. When an individual perceives an act of racism, a few of the physiological symptoms include (Harrell et al, 2003):

- Increased activity associated with cholinergic pathways related to anxiety
- Increased cortisol levels in the blood
- Increased prevalence of hypertension and high blood pressure (both systolic and diastolic)
- Heart Disease
- Higher rates of mortality (National Research council Panel on Race..., 2004)
ACUTE STRESS ... activates the more reactive sensors, facilitating learning and memory—a highly adaptive process (brain: “this is important; remember, and learn!”)

CHRONIC STRESS

ALLOSTATIC OVERLOAD

King (2016)
Incident of Racism
(microaggressions, violence, harassment, overt discrimination, abuse, etc.)

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Months to Years

CHRONIC STRESS

ALLOSTATIC OVERLOAD
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

- Low Sense of Belonging
- Imposter Syndrome
- Stress & Anxiety
- Sleep Deprivation
- Fear of Safety
- Stereotype Threat
- Binge drinking
- Disordered Eating
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(Williams, et al. 2014; Williams 2015; Mackenzie 2015)
How does racism impact the well-being of students?
This doesn't happen just in post-secondary

- A study by the Australian National University, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and the University of Michigan found that children of color face significant racial stereotyping from adults who work with them.
- This can manifest itself in disproportionate discipline practices.
- In a 2014 report the U.S. Department of Education revealed that Black children represent 48% of students receiving suspensions (though they represent 18% of preschool enrollment).
Why is it necessary to highlight racism in post-secondary?

- All the information we learn is in a Western context. It's important to recognize that this education may erase the complex histories of other communities.
- Race is still a taboo topic in our society.
- The “Colourblindness” approach erases the experiences of people of colour.
- Post-secondary institutions don't exist in a vacuum – the broader social climate influences every facet of our campuses.
Waterloo Regional Police 4 times more likely to stop you if you are black

Police Chief Bryan Larkin can’t explain why his officers stop and question black people at a rate far higher than their share of the population

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Marcia Smalls, president of the local chapter of the Congress of Black Women of Canada Ontario, is disheartened to hear that Waterloo Regional Police are more likely to stop black people to record their names without laying a charge. – David Bebee, Record staff

WATERLOO REGION — If you are black, Waterloo Regional Police are four times more likely to stop you on the street and ask your identity without accusing you of a crime.

The Record discovered this in comparing 62,350 people stopped by police over a decade to the regional population.

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‘This doesn’t happen here’: Racial slur spray-painted on Waterloo home

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‘What do you say to that?’ Waterloo man shocked by response to job application at Kitchener business

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Employer says job candidate wasn’t qualified for the position

Kate Bueckert: CBC News - Posted: Jul 07, 2016 10:43 AM ET | Last Updated: July 8, 2016

Jama Hagi-Yusuf graduated from the University of Waterloo in 2015. (Submitted photo)
March 21, 2016

Partnerships:
- Laurier Diversity and Equity Office
- Office of Aboriginal Initiatives

150 participants

19 Institutions Represented (3 Colleges, 16 Universities)

Panelists Included
- Renu Mandhane (Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission)
- Dr. Alvin Curling (Former Speaker of the House in Ontario)
- MPP Catherine Fife
3 Biggest Challenges to Bringing Racial Justice on Campus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Absence of “Pro-Active” Anti-Racism Measures</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of accountability</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Need for Appropriate Resources</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of “Safety” to Raise Concerns</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2. Insufficient Educational Supports for Racial Justice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of Training/ Education</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Whiteness and the Need for Diverse Faculty and Curriculum</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Racist Stereotypes and Campus Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complexities of intersectionality and Racial Justice</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Systemic Perpetuation of Racism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of Anti-Racist Community</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of Institutional Support</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of Policy</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of Institutional Research</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
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**TOTAL RESPONSES:** **95**
1. Sector-wide Anti-racism Task Force
2. Sector-wide Anti-racism Training for Senior Administration
3. Sector-wide Anti-racism Training for Faculty
4. Sector-wide Community of Practice for Racial Justice
5. Sector-wide Anti-racism Policy
How we mobilized around RAISE

- Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity and Equity
- This came from many of our friends telling us about the racist experiences they were having while on campus
- It was very difficult for us to comfort our friends when we were experiencing the same traumas.
- This service was not a novel idea.
- In November, Fiqir made a twitter thread on how we had been asked to collect statistics on how many people of colour were on campus.
But, this service wasn't met without opposition...
Main Dissenting Opinions

- There is no need nor evidence justifying a service like this
- UW (like other post-secondary institutions) is a meritocracy
- A service addressing racism would overburden the student budget
Despite opposition, students voted overwhelmingly in favour of a service for racialized students.
What this service will do

- Peer support hours from a trained volunteer/executive from 11am-1pm
- Events and socials
- A formal racism incident reporting mechanism
- Advocacy in inclusive student policies and anti-oppression training for staff, students and faculty
Limitations

- Student-run service
- Limited resources
In summary, here’s how Universities Can Address Racism:

- Collect race-based statistics
- Develop a thriving, present and relevant diversity and equity office.
- Support religious and cultural clubs
- Start anti-oppression training
- Listen to students
- Engage in meaningful allyship
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