

TO : THE DEANS' OFFICE

FROM : UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO FACULTY OF  
LAW EQUITY GROUPS\*

A  
PROFESSIONAL  
OBLIGATION TO  
DISMANTLE  
WHITE  
SUPREMACY AND  
ANTI-BLACK  
RACISM AT THE  
FACULTY

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\*See Signatories at end of Introduction

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# INTRODUCTION

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Equity-facing groups at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law (the “Faculty”) have developed these Calls to Action in a collaborative effort to address gaps in the school’s current approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion. While the Faculty’s existing efforts, such as the Black Future Lawyers (BFL) program, the holistic approach to admissions, and the needs-based approach to financial aid, are all commendable, we believe that they have proven insufficient in creating an institution which is an active anti-racist driver of equity.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement has led protests across the globe, expressing outrage over systemic racism within law enforcement and the legal system at large. The current focus on systemic racism and its pernicious, often lethal, effects on society have once again brought to light the destructive legacy of colonialism, slavery, and segregation that continues to pervade Canada.

As a gatekeeper to the legal profession, it is imperative for the Faculty to acknowledge that systemic racism does exist and that the legal system, including this institution, is not exempt. This is especially important given the Faculty’s position as one of the preeminent legal institutions in Canada and across the globe.

We believe that because of this position of power, the Faculty has an obligation to ensure its students are well-equipped to recognize and dismantle systemic racism within the legal sphere. This racism manifests itself in a wide variety of ways, such as the pervasiveness of colonial theory in the law and our curriculum, as well as in the interconnectedness of concepts like professionalism and ‘firm fit’ with white supremacy, patriarchy, and classism. The prevalence of these issues is further demonstrated by the Faculty’s historical underrepresentation of marginalized communities amongst faculty, staff, and the student body.

We believe that the effects of race on our experiences with the legal system, both as members of the public and as active members of the legal community, should be actively addressed through the Faculty’s Admissions Committee, legal ethics training seminars, course syllabi, and recruitment preparation. For example, when we study precedent-setting case law, professors have a duty to provide the necessary context for dismantling myths of objectivity that can hide racial factors and outcomes through formalized legal language.

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Faculty's failure to communicate this important context was made apparent by last year's Legal Research & Writing assignment that relied on harmful stereotypes of Indigenous people. While the responses of Professor Douglas Sanderson and Amanda Carling, Manager of Indigenous Initiatives were comprehensive and admirable, the entire Faculty, not just its Indigenous members, must work to meaningfully address and rectify the knowledge gaps which are so clearly evidenced by such incidents.

The Calls to Action outlined below are not an exhaustive list of what is required to dismantle systemic racism within the Faculty and the legal system as a whole. They were, however, developed with the benefit of input and perspectives from a wide range of equity-facing groups and our individual experiences. The Faculty has a further duty to not only deliberately and thoughtfully engage with these recommendations, but also to reflect on its own historic and continued role in perpetuating white supremacy and colonialism through its policies, practices, and curriculum.

Although Dean Iacobucci will soon be transitioning from his leadership role at the Faculty, we feel that immediate action is required in order to address and rectify the Faculty's ongoing role in perpetuating white supremacy. Not only do these issues directly impact racialized students, but they are deeply important to much of the wider student body. Further, a delayed response will lead to yet another graduating class entering the profession without the tools necessary to serve the diverse communities of Canada. Students must not be asked to carry the burden of racial injustice longer than is necessary merely because the Faculty is undergoing a change in leadership. Therefore, we urge the Deans' Office, including the Assistant and Associate Deans, to prioritize these recommendations and take tangible action, immediately and publicly, while also ensuring that the incoming Dean is committed to continuing this urgent and crucial work.

Sincerely,

Asia Law Society (ALS) | Black Law Students Association (BLSA) | Indigenous Law Students Association (ILSA) | Out in Law (OIL) | South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA)

# CALLS TO ACTION

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHORT-TERM (6 Months)

**Accessibility** - Expand financial aid and accessibility resources to address the unique needs that arise from remote learning

**Mental Health Supports** - Recognize the unique mental health needs of racialized students and further invest in mental health supports

**Student Equity Training** - Modify the 1L Orientation week and mandatory sessions to improve equity-focused training and better recognize the experiences of racialized students

**Transparency** - Review and share disaggregated data on applicants and admits with stakeholders

**Engagement with Equity-facing Groups** - Conduct quarterly meetings with equity groups to receive feedback on current equity initiatives

### MEDIUM-TERM (10 Months)

**Recruitment** - Provide additional supports for racialized students in the job recruitment process

**Hiring Racialized Faculty Members** - Create a plan that demonstrates how the Faculty intends to hire more racialized faculty members

**Pre-Law Supports** - Offer greater resources (e.g. more LSAT courses, replicating BFL efforts for other racialized communities) to pre-law students from marginalized and minority communities

**Faculty Training** - Prioritize equity training for current and future faculty and staff

**Connect to Resources** - Better connect historically underrepresented students with external entrance scholarships

**Performance Metrics** - Develop an annual progress report to assess and report on the progress of equity and diversity at the law school

### LONG-TERM (18 Months)

**Curriculum Improvements** - Modify the curriculum to reflect on the ongoing prevalence of colonial theory and include anti-oppression training

**Diversifying Research** - Increase the law school's research and scholarship in equity-related areas

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# CALLS TO ACTION

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## SUPPORT FOR RACIALIZED STUDENTS

### Job Recruitment Services

1. Establish programming which facilitates contact between student equity groups and lawyers that identify with the same groups
2. Address barriers in firm recruitment for marginalized students such as the concepts of “firm culture”, “professionalism” and “fit” which are often synonymous with having participated in elite activities or predominantly white spaces

### Accessibility Resources

1. Expand financial aid and other supports to address the unique needs that arise with remote learning
  - a. Provide a tech-related bursary for students who require upgraded laptops or hardware. The bursaries should also consider student’s inability to secure access to stable Internet in rural communities
  - b. In recognition of the fact that racialized students are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, record lectures for students with accessibility needs in accordance with the recommendations from the upcoming lecture recording letter addressed to the Faculty
2. Better connect racialized students with available external scholarships and entrance awards for historically marginalized communities
3. Provide international students with additional information on applicable internal and external financial aid opportunities

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# CALLS TO ACTION

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## Mental Health Supports

1. Ensure that mental health supports and embedded Faculty counsellors continue uninterrupted regardless of future budget cuts or other changes to administration
2. Create a formalized feedback process for student review of mental health services and supports within the law school
  - a. This system should consist of both follow-up forms after individual appointments with the embedded counsellor and an annual anonymous survey to allow for open and meaningful feedback from the student body
3. Centralize the full breadth of available resources to law students for mental health funding and mental health services on the existing Faculty of Law "Health and Wellness" webpage

## EDUCATION

### Co-Curricular Equity Training

1. Review and revise the 1L Ethics and Professionalism training in recognition of the diverse and unique experiences of racialized students at the law school  
Additional Suggestions:
  - a. Better ensure mandatory attendance of all training sessions which deal with topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion
  - b. Considering observed low attendance at 1L Ethics and Professionalism Training, ensure students have multiple opportunities throughout all years at the Faculty to engage with equity and diversity training. We encourage the school to provide this training in smaller sessions of 15-25 students.
  - c. Hire professional consultants trained in equity, diversity and inclusion work to lead all 1L ethics and anti-oppression training. Where calling upon minority students to do so, refrain from allowing such labour to be done unpaid, in recognition of the harmful historically disproportionate burden of such work, and that it is deserving of remuneration
  - d. Ensure the content of Ethics training includes meaningful education and discussion on colonialism, anti-Black racism, and systemic discrimination in the law, paying particular attention to avoiding re-traumatizing students and oversimplifying these issues

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# CALLS TO ACTION

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## EDUCATION

### Academic Curriculum

1. Prioritize a focus on inclusion and anti-oppression training in Legal Ethics
2. Task the 2020-2021 Faculty Council's Curriculum Committee with integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion into the curriculum. This review should be completed in consultation with anti-racist educators. As Dean, commit to working with the Faculty's professors to make the curriculum anti-racist and address the ongoing prevalence of colonial theory in the curriculum (particularly for 1L students)
  - a. Include supports for professors in doing this such as a day of training with consultants and historians who are from historically-oppressed communities
  - b. Seek guidance from professors on what additional supports for curriculum changes would be beneficial to them
  - c. Set a target date for the implementation of curricular changes. Incorporate a breadth of theoretical perspectives and frameworks within the curriculum to better address specific issues faced by marginalized groups
3. Create a more comprehensive curriculum that includes a range of legal frameworks such as feminist or critical race theories



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# CALLS TO ACTION

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## FACULTY AND STAFF

### Training and Research

1. Prioritize training on anti-Black racism, systemic discrimination and white supremacy for current and future faculty and staff
  - a. Train faculty to appropriately talk to equity groups as well as the larger student body on systemic racism and the way it manifests in the legal system
2. Create incentives for faculty to participate in this type of training and encourage scholarship and research in these areas
3. Create a fund for research on themes such as dismantling white supremacy, addressing anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and systemic racism within the criminal justice system, barriers for marginalized students in law schools and the broader legal community

### Hiring

1. Prioritize hiring racialized faculty in order to make the Faculty more inclusive and reflective of Canadian society and the communities that legal professionals serve
2. Review the existing hiring and tenure track processes in order to identify unconscious bias and systemic barriers in the hiring process
3. Consider the retention of a diverse faculty across all levels by providing racialized faculty with the proper supports and tools (including those on the tenure track)

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# CALLS TO ACTION

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## PRE-LAW SUPPORT

1. Replicate the Black Future Lawyers (BFL) efforts to offer greater resources and supports to all students from underrepresented, marginalized and minority communities
  - a. Offer more free LSAT preparation courses for high-potential, low-income undergraduate students and recent university graduates, being mindful of student-instructor ratios that allow for adequate one-on-one time
2. Review and share disaggregated data with stakeholders on past and future applicants and admits to the Faculty, in order to better understand and address the ongoing lack of diversity amongst law students at the Faculty, especially Black and Indigenous students
3. Re-weigh the various factors in Admissions assessments/criteria to account for unconscious and systemic barriers racialized applicants face in the academic world
  - a. Mandate unconscious bias training for members of the Admissions Committee and ensure that the Admissions Committee is a diverse body

## ENGAGEMENT WITH EQUITY-FACING GROUPS

1. Establish quarterly meetings with equity groups to receive feedback on the school's diversity and equity-based initiatives, and implement this in improving established efforts or creating new ones
2. Facilitate a connection between the Gender, Accessibility and Diversity Committee and equity groups
  - a. Provide a mechanism to enable equity groups to access the committee's support and resources in their efforts
  - b. Invite equity groups to provide their perspective during the Committee's meetings on relevant topics
3. Develop and share an annual progress report to assess and reflect on the school's diversity efforts and initiatives over the school year, as well as its successes and failures

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# SIGNATURES

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## ORGANIZATIONS

1. U of T Environmental Law Club
2. U of T Litigation Association
3. U of T Tax Law Association
4. U of T Animal Justice Student Association
5. U of T Sports and Entertainment Law Society
6. U of T Jewish Law Students' Association
7. U of T Students' Law Society (SLS)
8. U of T SLS Equity Officers
9. U of T International Law Society
10. Artists' Legal Advice Services
11. U of T Law and Politics Club
12. U of T CARL Chapter
13. U of T Christian Legal Fellowship
14. U of T Women & the Law
15. Ultra Vires

## CURRENT STUDENTS

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 16. Andrew Luba, 3L               | 33. Julia Pimentel, 2L              |
| 17. Branden Cave, 2L              | 34. Teodora Pasca, 3L               |
| 18. Robert Nanni, 3L              | 35. Vivian Cheng, 2L                |
| 19. Ryan Deshpande, 3L            | 36. Rebecca Barclay Nguinambaye, 3L |
| 20. Sherry Ghaly, 3L              | 37. Meruba Sivaselvachandran, 2L    |
| 21. Aya Refaat, 2L                | 38. Ifrah Farah, 2L                 |
| 22. Mike Bertrand, 2L             | 39. Temitope Ajibode, 2L            |
| 23. Natasha Williams, 2L          | 40. Katie Lawless, 2L               |
| 24. Emily Tessier, 2L             | 41. Asha Gordon, 2L                 |
| 25. Olivia Mazza, 2L              | 42. Rivers Wahl, 2L                 |
| 26. Ema Ibrakovic, 2L             | 43. Sabrina Sukhdeo, 2L             |
| 27. Laksmiina Balasubramaniam, 2L | 44. Andrew Easto, 2L                |
| 28. Rebecca Xie, 2L               | 45. Ada Roberts, 3L                 |
| 29. Quinn Harrington, 2L          | 46. Daniel Yang, 3L                 |
| 30. William Hall, 2L              | 47. Jemma Lewis, 2L                 |
| 31. Will Kosiancic, 2L            | 48. Rachel Allen, 2L                |
| 32. Audrey-Anne Delage, 2L        | 49. Madeline Stewart, 3L            |
|                                   | 50. Ben Jones, 2L                   |

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51. Hudson Manning, 2L
52. Safa Bajwa, 2L
53. Amy Chen, 2L
54. Michelle LaFortune, 3L
55. Abraham Ahmed, 2L
56. Min Oh, 2L
56. Hannah Bourgeois, 2L
57. Hannah Cinel, 2L
58. Hannah Johnson, 3L
59. Ainslie Pierrynowski, 2L
60. Greta Hoaken, 2L
61. Willem Crispin-Frei, 2L
62. Angela Gu, 2L
63. Mackenzie Cumberland, 2L
64. Lucy Yao, 2L
65. Mackenzie Claggett, 2L
66. Jean-Pierre D'Angelo, 2L
67. Kristy Milland, 3L
68. Hannah Goddard Rebstein, 3L
69. Cassie Devenyi, 2L
70. Kristen Kephelas, 3L
71. Maggie Shi, 2L
72. Adam Davis, 2L
73. Scott Wodhams, 3L
74. J.P. Gonsalves, 3L
75. Justin Mayne, 3L
76. Dan Schechner, 2L
77. Amanda Wolczanski, 3L
78. Stephanie Taylor, 3L
79. Genevieve Madill, 3L
80. Andrea Das-Wieczorek, 3L
81. Emily Tsui, 3L
82. Sierra Farr, 2L
83. Katelyn Johnstone, 3L
84. Will Hu, 2L
85. Sophie Zhao, 2L
86. Alina Valachi, 2L
87. Samantha Kokonis, 2L
88. Colin Hunt, 2L
89. Adam LaRiviere, 2L
90. Henry Dennis 2L
91. Deniz Yilmaz, 2L
92. Julia Nowicki, 2L
93. Celina Kassam, 3L
94. Leah Brockie, 3L
95. Hannah Lank, 2L
96. Maggie Arai, 2L
97. Benjamin Mayer-Goodman 3L
98. Seema Sidhu, 2L
99. Lynne Westerhof, 3L
100. Corinne Goldberger, 3L
101. Jessica Greco, 2L
102. Zhen Lin, 2L
103. Adrienne Ralph, 2L
104. Logan Hale, 2L
105. Karen Jia, 2L
106. Hailey Chin 2L
107. Michelle Huang, 3L
108. Dhriti Chakravarty, 2L
109. Natalie Chan, 2L
110. Courtney Cowan, 2L
111. Alisha Li, 2L
112. Michael Douglass, 3L
113. Evan Linn, 2L
114. Daiana Kostova, 3L
115. Amanda Cutinha, 3L
116. Nour Chehab Eddine, 3L
117. Tommy Pham, 2L
118. Michael Shaffer, 2L
119. Natalie Miller, 2L

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# SIGNATURES

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## ALUMNI

120. Karen Chen (Class of 2020)
121. Erika Voaklander (Class of 2020)
122. Leslie Anne St. Amour (Class of 2020)
123. Ioana Dragalin (Class of 2020)
124. Marcus Campbell (Class of 2019)
125. Beatrice Marry (Class of 2015)
126. Brad Valley (Class of 2016)
127. India Annamanthadoo (Class of 2020)
128. Lauren Wildgoose (Class of 2020)
129. Sukhmani Viridi (Class of 2020)
130. Christina Roussakis (Class of 2020)
131. Sam Pajak (Class of 2020)
132. Honghu Wang ('20)
133. Evan Rankin (Class of 2016)
134. Josh Lokko (Class of 2020)
135. Robert Sniderman (Class of 2019)
136. Emma Ryman (Class of 2020)
137. Brittany Cohen (Class of 2020)
138. Matthew Prior (Class of 2020)
139. Holly Kallmeyer (Class of 2019)
140. Angela Hou (Class of 2020)
141. Suhasini Rao (Class of 2020)
142. Rory Smith (Class of 2020)
143. Tali Chernin (Class of 2019)
144. Maria Alexiou (Class of 2020)
145. Alexandra Robertson (Class of 2019)
146. Sahar Sayyad (Class of 2020)
147. Eileen Church Carson (Class of 2020)
148. Hesam Wafaei (Class of 2020)
149. Aylin Manduric (Class of 2020)
150. Gurvir Sangha (Class of 2020)
151. Cody Koblinsky (Class of 2020)
152. Tom Collins (Class of 2020)
153. Emily Young (Class of 2018)