

UNIVERSITY  
of GUELPH

CHANGING LIVES  
IMPROVING LIFE

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY OFFICE

# UNDERSTANDING RACIALIZATION: creating a racially equitable university



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**booklets**  
**in this**  
**series**

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Recognizing Heterosexism, Homophobia and Transphobia:  
Creating a Queer Positive University

Understanding Disability: Creating an Accessible  
University

Discrimination Awareness: Creating a University Free of  
Discrimination and Harassment

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Maintaining and promoting human dignity is a core value of the University of Guelph. The University is therefore committed to a campus free from discrimination. This pamphlet details the University's position on discrimination and harassment based on racism and racialization.

# what is racism?

In the past, race was defined as a natural or biological division of the human species based on physical distinctions including skin colour and other bodily features. This notion of race emerged in the context of European domination of nations and peoples deemed non-white. It was used to establish a classification of peoples. Some of the greatest atrocities in human history have been associated with notions of racial superiority.

There is no legitimate scientific basis for racial classification. Genetic science now tells us that physical characteristics and genetic profiles correlate more strongly between “races” than among them. It is now recognized that notions of race are primarily centered on social processes that seek to construct differences among groups with the effect of marginalizing some in society.

While biological notions of race have been discredited, the social construction of race remains a potent force in society. The process of social construction of race is termed racialization.

While racist ideology may be openly expressed, it can also be deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these beliefs are unconsciously maintained by individuals and have become deeply embedded in our systems and institutions. It is important to recognize that racism is pervasive and complex. It is such a part of our society that it can be seen as the normal way of doing things. Moreover, it is easy for those who do not experience the effects of racism to deny its reality. This is both counterproductive and damaging to our society. Racism and racial discrimination must be recognized in order to combat their effects. Racist ideology exists at the individual, institutional or systemic and societal level.

The University’s human rights policy, which derives its authority from the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race and related grounds such as ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), ethnic origin and place of origin.

# individual racism

**R**acism may be expressed overtly, as well as through everyday behaviour.

## *Examples of individual racism:*

- avoiding contact with members of a racialized group;
- ignoring, silencing, shunning and belittling racialized individuals;
- offensive jokes, graffiti, emails and posters that target racialized people;
- insults, name-calling, verbal abuse and threats against persons because of race, colour or religion;
- hate crimes, violence against persons because of race, colour or creed (religion).

# institutional or systemic racism

**P**atterns of behaviour, policies or practices can create or maintain disadvantage for racialized persons. Often these policies and practices apply to everyone and on the surface seem neutral, but in their application, negatively affect racialized persons. Systemic racism can often result from the unintended consequence of the normal ways of doing business in an organization. Since much of systemic racism tends to be silent and hidden, it is important to look not just at the structure but also at the impact and effect of policies and practices on racialized individuals and groups.

## *Examples of institutional or systemic racism:*

- curriculum that has the effect of marginalizing, stereotyping or making Aboriginal people or racialized people invisible;
- reprisals against people who have made a human rights complaint about racial discrimination;
- a lack of representation of racialized people at various levels of the University;
- the assumption that racialized people are not qualified for a job and only get hired because they are “equity hires.”

# what can i do about systemic racism

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- Accommodate racial, cultural and religious differences in the work, study and living environment.
- Be open to self-inquiry and criticism of your own attitudes. Ask yourself if they are reinforcing elements of systemic racism in your environment.
- Help to develop and promote anti-racism education resources and activities.
- Make sure that anti-racism is included in policy and curriculum development.

## societal racism

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**S**ocietal racism consists of a range of concepts, ideas, images or institutions that all work together to form a framework which we use to interpret and give meaning to racialized thought.

*Examples of societal racism include:*

- omitting Aboriginal people's contributions or perspectives from academic fields of study;
- using culturally biased instruments to assess candidates;
- assuming racialized Canadians are not from here.

# what is anti-racism?

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**A**nti-racism is an active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice caused by racism. It includes developing programs, policies and activities to uncover and change deeply held beliefs and behaviours. Human action is necessary to combat racism and create equality.

## the assumptions of anti-racism education

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- Racism is learned and can be unlearned.
- Racism is structural and institutional, not just outward comments or conduct.
- Racism is caused by historical, social, cultural, political and economic factors – it is not inevitable and can be eliminated.
- Racism is identified by its effects, resulting in inequity and disadvantage for racialized people.
- Racism exists in educational systems because it exists in society.
- Racism can be dismantled only if individuals and groups take action against it and address their own attitudes and behaviour, as well as those of the institutions around them.

# myths about racism & racial discrimination

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**MYTH:** Racism is exaggerated and, aside from exceptional cases, does not exist in Canada.

**FACT:** Racism exists in many different forms and is pervasive in our society. It is embedded in our institutions, organizations and ways of thinking.

**MYTH:** Mentioning the existence of racism or racial discrimination or taking proactive measures to address racism or racial discrimination constitutes reverse racism.

**FACT:** Anti-racism measures remedy discrimination by putting racialized people on the same footing as people who are not experiencing discrimination. Society benefits when each member is allowed to achieve his or her full potential

**MYTH:** Racialized people themselves, and not racism or racial discrimination, are at fault for their disadvantage or state of otherness.

**FACT:** Racism and racialization cause people to alienate each other. The long-term effects of racism have resulted in disadvantage.

**MYTH:** Immigration is bad for Canada as immigrants take jobs away, commit more crime, are a drain on the system or do not fit into our society.

**FACT:** According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, immigration stimulates Canada's growth, prosperity and cultural pluralism. Nearly 59 per cent of Canada's immigrants are in the skilled worker and business immigrant categories. They help fill shortages in our labour market or invest in our economy, contributing to Canada's economic growth.



# what to do about racism & racial discrimination

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## INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS

- Learn about and be sensitive to racial, ethnic and cultural groups other than your own;
- Increase your understanding of another person's experiences and point of view;
- Learn about the impact of racism on racialized people and groups, both historically and today;
- Be conscious of racist attitudes, language and stereotypes;
- Challenge your assumptions about people;
- Recognize the need to take personal responsibility for eliminating racism;
- Be aware that silence condones racist behaviour;

## TAKE ACTION

- Promote mutual respect between individuals.
- Offer support to people being harassed.
- Speak up against racist comments or jokes.
- Challenge others' negative assumptions about people.
- Model racially inclusive and respectful language and behaviour.
- Create learning environments that include the perspectives and experiences of diverse cultural groups.
- Promote a respectful and inclusive environment.

# what to do about racism & racial discrimination

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## BECOME AN ALLY

- Recognize institutional barriers that prevent members of target groups from having equal access to power and authority.
- Recognize ways that institutional barriers maintain power structures.
- Support and engage in research/initiatives that empower racialized groups.
- Set up mentoring programs for racialized groups - students and employees - to encourage them to succeed.
- Set up discussion groups to explore ways that racism and racialization can be addressed.
- Use both personal and organizational power to challenge institutional racism.

# finally, a word about intersectionality

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**A**n individual can be a member of one or more protected groups. For example, a racialized person may be a woman and have a disability. Each identity may expose a person to a distinct form of discrimination. The combination of various forms of discrimination produces something that is unique and distinct from any one form. Each individual's particular experience of discrimination based on the confluence of their identities should be acknowledged and remedied accordingly.

# glossary

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**ANTI-SEMITISM** is a form of racism that is defined as stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards Jewish people or people otherwise identified as Jewish. As a group, people who are Jewish have faced violence, discrimination and harassment from those who would set them apart on the basis of perceived shared characteristics.

**DISCRIMINATION BY ASSOCIATION** means comments or conduct based on an association, relationship or dealings with a racialized person. This includes targeting people who object to racist comments aimed at members of another group.

*Examples:*

- Inappropriate sexual comments based on stereotypes are made to a woman who is dating a racialized man.
- A landlord prevents his tenant from subletting his apartment to a couple of Pakistani origin.

**ISLAMOPHOBIA** is a form of racism that is defined as stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia also rests on perceived universal characteristics.

**HISTORICAL DISADVANTAGE** is the continued effect of historical actions based on racist ideologies and supported through world power structures. The combined impact of current and historical disadvantage is reflected in societal trends of low education, poverty and income disparity. It is a factor that can give rise to, or contribute to, systemic discrimination. It is therefore necessary to consider an individual or group's already disadvantaged position in Canadian society when determining whether systemic discrimination is taking place.

# glossary

**LANGUAGE-RELATED DISCRIMINATION** is a result of accents or manners of speech, which can be racialized characteristics. A person's fluency or accent may be used to mask discrimination based on race.

*Example:* A residence manager does not add an applicant to the residence waiting list because the applicant is not fluent in English and the manager assumes that it will be hard to communicate with her.

**POISONED ENVIRONMENTS** are created by discriminatory comments or conduct, depending on their nature and impact.

*Example:* A co-worker mimics the speech of a Chinese-Canadian employee.

**RACE** refers to a group that is seen by others, or sees itself, as sharing common ancestry. The ideas we have about race are based on social processes used to construct differences between groups of people. The differences can be related to geographical, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors.

This process, called racialization, can have the effect of marginalizing groups of people in society. While there is no biological basis for the idea of a race of people, race is a social construction that is lived and has powerful and real consequences for individuals.

**RACIAL HARASSMENT** refers to patterns of behaviour or comments which serve to isolate, humiliate, intimidate or exclude racialized individuals. People experiencing racial harassment may not object to the comments or conduct because they are afraid of the consequences of speaking out.

*Examples of racial harassment:*

- racial epithets, slurs, jokes, name calling or nicknames;
- racial cartoons or graffiti;

# glossary

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- derogatory comments that ridicule individuals because of race-related characteristics, religious dress, etc.;
  - singling out an individual using teasing or jokes related to race, ancestry, place of origin or ethnic origin;
  - inappropriate references to racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan;
  - circulation of racially offensive jokes, pictures or cartoons by e-mail or having a racially offensive screensaver.

**RACIAL PROFILING** refers to any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion or place of origin to subject an individual to scrutiny or treat them differently. Racial profiling is not based on a reasonable suspicion of the person.

*Example:* Two African-Canadian men are pulled over while driving a Ford Mustang. The Constable asks for proof of insurance and vehicle registration but does not accept the validity of the documents offered or the explanations given. He tickets the driver, and orders the car towed.

**RACIALIZATION** is the process through which groups come to be designated as different and on that basis subjected to unequal treatment. Racialized groups include people who might experience differential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, religion or culture. Racialized groups are treated outside the norm and receive unequal treatment based on their race. Racialization can extend to specific traits and attributes, which are connected to racialized people and deemed to be abnormal and of less worth. Besides physical characteristics of people, other characteristics that are commonly racialized are accent, speech, name, clothing, diet, intelligence, beliefs, practices and habits.

# glossary

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## **REVERSE DISCRIMINATION/REVERSE RACISM:**

Measures to address systemic discrimination may sometimes be characterized as reverse discrimination or tokenism. Persons who receive the benefit of the measures are thereby stigmatized as being undeserving or receiving special treatment. The purpose of these measures is not to give racialized persons an advantage but to place them on the same footing as persons who have not experienced discrimination.

**STEREOTYPING** is the use of categories such as race, ethnicity or religion to gain, process and remember information about others.

*Example:* An educator encourages South Asian Canadian students only towards math and engineering, while discouraging sports.

**SUBTLE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION** means acts or conduct which have a discriminatory effect. There does not need to be any intention to discriminate.

*Example:* A manager frequently rolls his eyes or interrupts when a racialized employee speaks during staff meetings, even though nothing wrong or inappropriate is being said. The manager is not observed to do this with other employees.

# resources

## GETTING HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

If you feel that you are experiencing or have witnessed discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, creed, ethnic origin, or citizenship at the University of Guelph, call the Human Rights and Equity Office at ext. 53000.

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### ON CAMPUS RESOURCES

Human Rights and Equity Office	Ext. 53000
Campus Police	Ext. 52000
Counseling Services	Ext. 53244
Occupational Health Services	Ext. 52133
Aboriginal Resource Centre	Ext. 58074
Centre for Students with Disabilities	Ext. 56208
Campus Safe Walk	Ext. 53200
Student Health Services	Ext. 52131
Central Students' Association Human Rights Office	Ext. 52629
OUTline	Ext. 56358

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### GUELPH AREA RESOURCES

City Police	519-824-1212
Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis 24-hour line	519-836-5710
	1-800-265-7233 (Wellington)

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