

Sept. 4, 2020

Racial inequality and violence – UTM's role: a message from the VP & Principal

To UTM Community,

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rodney Levi, Ahmaud Arbery, Ejaz Choudry, Chantel Moore—and, now, Jacob Blake. Yet another racist shooting, in a centuries-long history of the oppression of Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples. I believe the University of Toronto Mississauga should recognize this injustice as a community.

Nearly two weeks ago, in an action still reverberating around the world, Wisconsin police officers shot Jacob Blake seven times in the back in front of his three young children. Blake was unarmed; but Blake is Black; and he's now paralyzed.

If you find it hard to hear these stories, imagine trying to live them. If you find it hard to hear these stories, then work to prevent their repetition.

UTM relies on the outstanding work of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people: faculty, librarians, staff, students, alumni. They discover knowledge for the common good. They inspire communities of inclusive excellence. They lead conversations of power and substance. But they face structures of racial inequality and racial violence, and they navigate cultures of entrenched biases.

I write to you not only in an expression of anti-racist solidarity but with a commitment for the future: we will learn; we will act; we will do better.

I have appointed Professor Rhonda McEwen as the Vice President and Principal's Special Advisor on Anti-Racism and Equity. This position will amplify the essential work that Professor McEwen is already doing with UTM's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office. Drawing on her leadership experience within the tri-campus Black Faculty Working Groups, Professor McEwen will build bridges across our diverse communities, helping make anti-racism a basis for UTM's excellence. Thanks to her for taking on this important role.

UTM will continue to implement new anti-racist initiatives. We will strengthen our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. We will champion an education focused on resilience, empathy, and social justice. We will promote resources, such as [Restore @ U of T](#), that confront the effects of racism and support Black, Indigenous, and racialized faculty, librarians, staff, and students. And we will continue listening to criticisms of our institutional failures.

We should find it hard to hear about racial injustice; and we must work harder to create a better future.

With thanks,

Alexandra Gillespie
Vice President & Principal
University of Toronto Mississauga