

Systemic Issues in Trying to get Cases of Racism Heard: Where Policy Fails?

A Case Scenario

Introduction:

What is Racism? Pause

Although racial problems and conflicts periodically surface in the Canadian news media, many Canadians have little idea of what constitutes race and racism and let alone appropriate approach to solving such problems. “The roots of racist ideology are grounded in the daily experiences of people and in the practice of social Institutions, (Bolaria and Li , 1998)”. Racism is not an outcome of cultural misunderstanding; rather it is a deliberate ideology designed to justify the unjust treatment of the subordinate group for the purpose of exploitation. Although skin color does not provide adequate biological grounds for classifying people it gives sufficient social justification for segregating the undesirables maltreatment.

Every time I talked to people about the goal and topic of this conference, I was being told that “ohhhh this is a sensitive issue.”

Why is it a sensitive Issue? Pause

Okay, I am fully aware that the history of Canada is very different from that of the United States, “...we are not the United states, we are mosaic, didn't take part in slavery, didn't take part in colonization, implying we don't discriminate here.” Far be it from the truth. What exist in Canada today, and I'm speaking from experience is call “the new modern racism” and is subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination against minority ethnic groups. This involves apparent support for egalitarian principles while also denying continued discrimination against minorities, showing antagonism towards minority demands and resentment against any

preferential treatment designed to redress past imbalances.” And of course “Glass Ceiling,” subtle barriers based on attitudinal or institutional bias that prevent qualified females from advancing to top-level position. Such that one could be working for say 15 years in Vancouver and never seem to get any promotion or when the immigration quota of Canada seem to be about 2% for African Immigrants. Excuse me to say, but this form of racism is ever more disgusting and deep seated than the blatant kind we see in the United States today.

What happens if we continue to say that “UBC is one of the best universities in the whole wide world, we are international and discrimination is not supposed to be talked about here? Although it is very much exhibited here but our authorities would go all out to, a student would say “shut you up” if you complain or speak out?

I would be doing few quotes from the “Great Reverend,” Martin Luther King Jr. He’s the source of my inspiration and he lives forever today, deep inside my heart. When he give his “I have a dream...” speech, “now is the time to lift our nation (UBC) from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood,” “it would be fatal to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of it’s colored citizens,” “No no we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” From the Birmingham jail he said and I quote: “I would not hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more empathic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community wit no other alternative,” Like so many experiences of the past we were confronted with blasted hopes and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action...”

What is this “direct action?”

The result of unsolved, unspoken discrimination. We can't handle it, let's keep her/him quiet from speaking out. No Equity or AMS should not get involved in this case otherwise it would be treated as a racial one.

The Case: (Please see powerpoint attachment)

Now let me present a case that I took up a month ago with our University Authorities.

Some students, all international including 3 colored males, went to a resident on campus for a party.

These students are chatting away outside in front of that resident while one of them decides to go and find out if they could get a ticket to go in.

While waiting and talking, 2 police officers arrive at the scene and say; "you, you and you kindly leave the resident." On the grounds that they didn't have tickets, were not students of that resident but, students of another resident on campus, students of UBC and more over were only chatting up freely with other friends who live in that resident but also not part of the party. However, the friend they are waiting for, is not the same as they are...put enters the party.

Apparently, residents' advisors had called the RCMP.

The officers went straight up only to these 3 students and insisted that they leave, that they were just doing their job. If the students are unsatisfied they should contact the university authority to make a complaint.

I took up the case notifying several authorities on campus:

It took about 2 weeks for the University authority to finally set up a meeting, thus the students were not called, emailed or talked to

personally in anyway to establish concern and care. (I thought if it were a rape case whether it would have been approached the same way).

In the Interim, I was used as an in-betweenner (I'm a student, who have also been discriminated against and it was not my duty to be involved at that depth).

Just before the meeting was due, we had no support person from the university. We were supposed to have gone in to meet the university authority all by ourselves until I suggested in the "dime minute" that we needed that.

At the end of the meeting:

There were discrepancies between the narration the students had, and that of residence advisors and the RCMP Reports presented by UBC authority.

The students perceived the behavior of the RCMP and the Rez Advisors as racial. They are hurt, afraid, and worried. They commented that, "we were told Canada is not like this, even worse of all on the university campus we would expect better treatment because people should be enlightened and educated."

There were no response from Equity and the Alma Mater Society (the student society). The UBYssey did contact me. International House Executive Director did suggest counseling by the International Students Advisors and that was it.

I had to exchange several emails back and forth between the authorities and the students, making suggestions and insisting how I felt the case should have been approach before we found a "somewhat" headway.

Interaction:

What do you think should have been the proper approach to

solving this case?

What is the role of Equity? AMS? Rez Advisor?

Does UBC has any protocol at all in solving such cases?

What do you think would happen in the long run if UBC continues to sideline racial issues—systemic racial issues?

Can the UBC have influence or say as to how the RCMP relate to students on campus?

What if a UBC student has been discriminated against outside of campus, can the university do something about that?

Closure:

Next week I have a meeting with the university authority, what should I be telling them in terms of establishing a long term awareness program on racism?

Any other Comments?

Thank you so much for all your great suggestions. I have learned a lot because I believe the more you know the more you don't know. I think it is about time that we call a spade a spade. I must admit that I am not afraid to be bold for it was of this cause the “great reverends” life was cut short. But what do we see today in America? Blacks and whites are eating on the same table just as he dreamed in the 60's. Let's put down our silly tradition, bury our pride and kick-out ignorance for in this way believe you me there is a better life. There's no need to be secretive and sensitive.

I would like to end with a famous quote of my hero, Where do we go from here?: Chaos or Community? Educational reforms have been even more sluggish and entangled in bureaucratic stalling and economy-dominated decisions...at no time has a total, coordinated

and fully adequate program been conceived, as a consequence, fragmentary and spasmodic reforms have failed to reach down to the profoundest needs of the poor and marginalized.

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