

GEORGETOWN WOMAN SPEAKS OUT ABOUT RACIAL EXPERIENCES AT POLITICAL SUMMIT

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A Georgetown woman says that she was left "traumatized" by racial incidents she recently experienced while participating in a women's political leadership program on Parliament Hill.

Serisha Iyar-Singh is among the participants of colour who say they believe they were the victims of targeted and systemic racism at Daughters of the Vote, an event that brings women from every riding across the country to Ottawa for a multiday, in-depth

political experience.

"Growing up in Georgetown as one of the only non-white kids in town, and coming from a family that lived through apartheid, I thought I was prepared to be tokenized," she said, noting that former delegates from the program had also forewarned her of what to expect. "However, I was not prepared to be traumatized."

While the 23-year-old notes that the bulk of the harassment was aimed at Indigenous, black and Muslim delegates, she said she was one of the women of colour - including her younger sister, Trisha -

who was essentially unable to use the decompression rooms provided at the event, as white delegates were using the space to "complain they were scared of us."

"As a result, we were forced to congregate behind closed doors in hiding, where we could cry, debrief and comfort one another during a traumatic week of microaggressions and blatant racism," she said. "We were not able to participate together in groups publicly because our presence was apparently threatening to white delegates."

The Georgetown Dis-



Serisha Iyar-Singh/photo Georgetown's Serisha Iyar-Singh is among the Daughters of the Vote participants who say they were the targets of racism during their time in Ottawa.

trict High School alumna took to social media to post about both the good and bad parts of the program she had experienced. She

said she then began receiving direct messages from delegates that she deemed "both inherently racist, and a result of my partici-

pation in some of the protests that occurred at Daughters of the Vote."

The local woman was among the delegates who made headlines by turning their backs in protest during Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's speech at the event; peaceful protests were also held in response to some other speakers, like Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer.

After returning home and reflecting on what had happened, Iyar-Singh said she realized when speaking with her mother that the tactics she experienced were all too familiar.

"In South Africa, my family and other people of colour were not allowed to congregate together either, as part of the apartheid system," she said. "This was when I realized how traumatizing the week had been."

The Daughters of the Vote event was presented

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