

Continued from page 2

cial media and was met with a huge backlash from students at my school who harassed me for days with the N-word," said Graham. "One went as far as to wish I would get stabbed."

Henry said unfortunately Graham's experience isn't an isolated one. She collected examples from students in other HDSB schools to share with council. They included examples of hispanophobia and anti-Asian sentiments.

"These stories portray an environment that's unfit for learning or development, which are the two fundamental aspects of school," said Henry.

Now, the teens are proposing several steps the HDSB could take to address the issue. These measures include full enforcement of existing policies designed to address racism, mandatory racial sensitivity learning for any

students who violate the protocols, and treating online incidents of racism the same as in-school situations.

Regional council went on to pass a motion that urges the school board to consider the students' proposals. The resolution, put forth by Oakville Mayor Rob Burton and seconded by Burlington Coun. Lisa Kearns, also offers the region's support for efforts by students, teachers and school boards to ensure more inclusive learning environments.

Rob Eatough, the HDSB superintendent who oversees equity, told Metroland Media that the recommendations made by Graham and Henry are "ones that we have or are already in the midst of implementing in relation to our broader Human Rights Action and Accountability Plan: The Way Forward. A key area of focus for the board moving into next year is in relation to the call for in-

creased monitoring and accountability."

When it comes to online incidents of racism, Eatough said that schools do have the ability to become involved when a student's well-being or achievement are being impacted, adding that there have been many cases where students submitted screenshots of negative online interactions for administration to address.

He said that HDSB Director of Education Stuart Miller and senior staff met with Graham and Henry on April 29 to discuss their concerns.

"The meeting was productive and the students were promised that action would be taken locally, as well as more broadly," he said. "Since that meeting, both the director and myself have been keeping the students updated on the actions undertaken. One such action has been the establishment of a process to gather insights into the HDSB's response to rac-

**"These stories portray an environment that's unfit for learning or development, which are the two fundamental aspects of school."**

- Tyler Henry

ism. In June, focus groups will be established. Data gathered will be used to help further inform the board's approach to this critical issue."

During the council meeting, Graham asserted that the HDSB's zero tolerance policy for racism is "not upheld," based on the experience she and other BIPOC students have had at school, including the repeated use of racist language.

When asked about this, Eatough said the issue of addressing discriminatory and harmful language has been a priority for the board over the past few

years.

"All staff received mandatory training on 'Dismantling Racism' at the beginning of the school year," he said. "A critical element to this training was the importance of language and the impact it can have on the safety and well-being of our students and staff."

Since then, he said the HDSB has undertaken several actions to address the issue of racism, including: the development of a discriminatory and harmful language protocol, the aforementioned Way Forward plan, the inclusion of goals and strategies in the HDSB multi-year plan

2020-2024 to intentionally confront racism in schools, and the revision of procedures used to select instructional and library resources.

He noted the board also recently implemented safeguards in its communication system that will "quarantine" emails that use hate or bias-motivated words.

Burton said that regional council stands ready to help the HDSB address the issue, calling Henry's recounting of racist incidents throughout Halton schools "a wake-up call."

"This is not a White Oaks issue — this is systemic," he said.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: After hearing about the racism students like Alexis Graham and Tyler Henry say they're experiencing at school, we took a closer look at how the HDSB is addressing the issue now and for the future.*

**Dental Implants**  
It feels great to smile with confidence! Available here...  
New Patients Welcome  
Family and Cosmetic Dentistry

Marketplace Dental Centre  
905-877-CARE (2273) • www.georgetowndental.com • Proudly Serving Georgetown Since 1994.  
Georgetown Marketplace Mall

HOURS: Monday & Wednesday 8:00am - 8:00pm • Tuesday & Thursday 8:00am - 6:00pm • Saturday 8:00am - 3:00pm

**NOW OPEN**

Naturally Fresh food & Juice Bar

WITH THIS COUPON REDEEM

**25% Off**

naturallyfresh.ca  
416-809-6497  
158 Guelph St. Georgetown

CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS. LIMIT ONE COUPON PER CUSTOMER.  
\*This coupon is valid until June 30th, 2021

**Culligan Water™**

**Rent Soft Water**  
Spend less money on energy and detergents in your home with a Culligan Water Softener. Ask us how you can save today!

Get your first three months for only **\$9.95/mth.**  
Call for details

**Ask us about our customer Referral Program**

**SAVE \$500\***  
**6 MONTHS\* NO PAYMENTS NO INTEREST**

OR

**12 EQUAL PAYMENTS\* INTEREST FREE**

5 Mountainview Rd N, Georgetown | (905) 877-6242  
www.culligan.com | www.culliganrewards.ca

SUBJECT TO CREDIT APPROVAL. LIMITED TIME OFFER. DEALER PARTICIPATION VARIES.