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## Laurier's Social Justice Forum to focus on anti-racism in post-secondary education

BRANTFORD – What do racialized students, staff and faculty experience in post-secondary education? That question will be answered at the fifth annual **Social Justice Forum**, focused this year on **anti-racism in higher education**, to be held **Sept. 23-24** at Laurier's Brantford campus.

In addition to a **keynote speech** about racialization and resistance in Canadian universities, one of the centrepieces of the forum will be the public launch of **Being Raced**, a research study that began as an undergraduate project through Laurier's [Faculty of Liberal Arts Research Apprenticeship Program](#).

Four students began the research at Laurier in 2016: **Paige Grant** (BA '18), **Azka Choudhary** (BA '18), **Joey Lee** (BA '18) and **Kate Harvey** (BA'17). The first three students completed the project on a volunteer basis after graduating and will be speaking at the launch.

"Being Raced is a report amplifying the voices of racialized people at Laurier," said Grant, now a master's student at the University of Toronto's Department of Social Justice Education. "It's different from the typical research done within universities because it was mostly racialized students collecting experiences from other racialized students. That dynamic made a big difference in how we were able to conduct conversations."

Through a multi-campus online survey and face-to-face interviews on Laurier's Brantford campus, the researchers found the majority of respondents had experienced or witnessed racism on campus. Experiences included street harassment, stereotyping, hearing racist jokes and feeling tokenized. Because the vast majority of these experiences were not reported, one of the study's recommendations is to implement a reporting system for such incidents and to make it clear where racialized students, staff and faculty can go for support.

"This research shows that racism is a major, urgent issue," said Grant, who is co-organizing the Social Justice Forum with the Being Raced group's mentor, Associate Professor [Vanessa Oliver](#). "We found that racism affects the mental health, relationships and work of racialized students, staff and faculty."

"The university has implemented a number of measures to improve equity, diversity and inclusivity on campus and is working on others, but more could be done," said Oliver. "We are working on recruiting and retaining more staff and faculty of colour and creating more equitable representation on bodies such as the Students' Union."

Laurier is currently in the process of hiring a new **senior advisor in equity, diversity and inclusion** (EDI) and has created a number of support positions focused on EDI among faculty and staff. The university recently received a [federal capacity-building grant](#) and is participating in a [pilot award program to advance EDI in the research community](#).

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The [Centre for Student Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) supports multiple student groups that help students find community and engage with EDI issues, as well as supporting EDI and social justice initiatives in the classroom and in spaces such as residences.

“While racism is not unique to our campuses, studies such as this are important to illustrate the experiences of our university community,” said **Pamela Cant**, Laurier’s assistant vice-president: human resources and equity. “This report, together with other research, will help inform our ongoing work in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion.”

In addition to the launch of *Being Raced*, the Social Justice Forum will feature a keynote speaker, Assistant Professor **rosalind hampton** of the Department of Social Justice Education at the University of Toronto.

hampton, who does not capitalize her name, is co-president of the Black Canadian Studies Association and author of a forthcoming book exploring racialized people’s experiences at McGill University, where she completed her PhD in Educational Studies.

The Social Justice Forum will conclude with an exhibition of art by Black, Indigenous and other people of colour (BIPOC) in the lobby of the SC Johnson Building. Caribbean and soul food will be served at the event.

The following Social Justice Forum events on Laurier’s Brantford campus are free of charge and open to all:

- Launch of *Being Raced*: **Monday, Sept. 23, 2:30-5 p.m.**, Room CB100, Carnegie Building
- Keynote speech by rosalind hampton: **Tuesday, Sept. 24, 4-5:20 p.m.**, Room RCW203, Research and Academic Centre West
- BIPOC Art Gallery: **Tuesday, Sept. 24, 5:30-8 p.m.**, SC Johnson Building lobby

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