

Stories from Canadian Campuses over the Last Few Months

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Western University: In early October, photographs of four students clad in Western purple and posing in front of a banner reading “Western Lives Matter” were posted to the internet. Administrators at the university launched an investigation to determine whether the students involved had violated the Student Code of Conduct.

“‘Black Lives Matter’ is an important human rights movement and a powerful response to systemic racism that permeates our society,” Jana Luker, Western’s vice-president for student experience, wrote. “Co-opting the ‘Lives Matter’ phrase in this way is repugnant and trivializes the validity of this international cause and network.”

Western’s code includes the sentence: “Nothing in this Code shall be construed to prohibit peaceful assemblies and demonstrations, lawful picketing, or to inhibit free speech as guaranteed by law.”

The investigation concluded that no student violated the code. “It did not rise to the threshold as a code violation under our student code,” Ms Luker explained.

Sources: <http://www.safs.ca/issuescases/westernlivesmatter/>

University of Lethbridge: Also in early October, professor Anthony Hall was suspended without pay by Lethbridge president Mike Mahon because of concerns that Dr Hall might have contravened the hate-speech provisions of Section 3 of the Alberta Human Rights Act.

Dr Hall is an outspoken critic of Israel, and some people say that his internet postings have been anti-Semitic. Nothing in President Mahon’s public statements faults Dr Hall’s research, teaching, or behaviour toward colleagues or students. The suspension is entirely for extra-mural speech.

Both the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association and the Canadian Association of University Teachers have called for Dr Hall’s reinstatement.

Sources: <http://www.safs.ca/issuescases/anthonyhall/suspended.html>

University of Toronto: On 3 October 2016, psychology professor Jordan Peterson received a letter from the chair of his department stating that failing to use student's preferred pronouns constitutes discriminatory treatment under human rights legislation. The letter instructs Dr Peterson "to comply with applicable human rights law." On 18 October 18, Dr Peterson received a similar letter written jointly by his dean and the university's vice-provost.

Dr Peterson will give the keynote address at the SAFS Annual General Meeting, Saturday 13 May 2017.

Sources: <http://www.safs.ca/issuescases/jordanpeterson/>

Hallowe'en: The campus equity office at the University of British Columbia held its annual awareness campaign, "Think Before You Dress Up." Despite its fear that students will costume themselves thoughtlessly, UBC does not enforce rules regarding costumes.

That's too bad, would be the reaction of University of Windsor law professor Richard Moon. "It seems entirely appropriate for an institution to ask students to think about why they might be wearing a particular costume," Mr Moon said. "Does it involve denigrating or mocking disadvantaged groups?" Mr Moon thinks restrictions should be applied to such costumes.

While Canadian universities themselves didn't go further than awareness campaigns (at least to the knowledge of SAFS), student associations weren't so shy. The student union at Brock University, in St. Catharines, Ontario, used a costume protocol for the Hallowe'en fun it sponsored. "If a member of your party is denied entry because of their costume, they will be escorted to a space where they can change or remove the offending item," students are told.

Students dressed as Donald Trump were not immediately turned away. Laura Hughes, the Student Justice Centre supervisor, suggested that those who wore Trump costumes in the spirit of mockery or critique might be admitted.

The student society at McGill University vetted costumes partiers wore to its bash by giving out stickers: red for stop, green for go, and yellow. If you got a yellow sticker, you had to sit for an interview.

Sources:

Douglas Quan, "Universities crack down on offensive Halloween costumes at campus parties," 20 October 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/universities-crack-down-on-offensive-halloween-costumes-at-campus-parties>

Queen's University: The actor that director Maggie Purdon, of Queen's Vagabond Theatre, selected to play the Moor of Venice was female. "We wanted [the role of Othello] to be cast as a woman because then it would be more of an issue of sexuality, and the issue would be that

Othello's sexuality makes him an outsider." That actor, though, was white. (The possibility of blackface was not broached in any published report SAFS read.)

Four weeks before opening night, Queen's Vagabond cancelled the production and apologized for what the troupe agreed was an oppressive artistic decision. "[T]o have people of colour feel as though their identities were being invalidated.... Theatre is a form of art, but it becomes unacceptable when artistic decisions are oppressive."

Vagabond gave a second reason for the cancellation. "For the safety and mental health of our entire team we unfortunately feel the need to suspend our production of *Othello*." In an interview, Ms Purdon added: "I was feeling super anxious. I wasn't getting any sleep. It was making me feel sick to my stomach because people were upset, and nobody was really being informed."

The two reasons for backing out are compatible, although people convinced of the first wouldn't likely add the second. Neither reason, though, has to do with the quality of the director's vision or the experience of *Othello* the audience would have had.

Sources:

Alex Palermo, "Queen's Vagabond suspends production of Othello: Co-artistic directors apologize after backlash over casting decision," 4 November 2016, [HTTP://WWW.QUEENSJOURNAL.CA/STORY/2016-11-03/ARTS/QUEENS-VAGABOND-SUSPENDS-PRODUCTION-OF-OTHELLO/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2016-11-03/arts/queens-vagabond-suspends-production-of-othello/)

Graeme Hamilton, "Queen's University stage production scrapped over 'oppressive' choice of white woman to play Othello," 4 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/arts/on-stage/queens-university-stage-production-scrapped-over-oppressive-choice-of-white-woman-to-play-othello>

University of British Columbia: In June 2016, *Cellist of Sarajevo* author Steven Galloway was fired as associate professor and chair of the creative writing program, because of an "irreparable breach of the trust placed in faculty members" following undisclosed accusations of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and bullying. (No accusation has been investigated by the police.)

Confidentiality requirements prevent UBC from explaining just why Mr Galloway was fired, and the lack of information has caused both complainants and supporters of Mr Galloway to question the fairness of the proceedings. Madeleine Thien, author of *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, has instructed UBC to remove her name from its website and promotional materials, and Hart Hanson, creator of the TV series *Bones*, has reconsidered his intention to donate to the university.

In mid-November, over seventy Canadian writers signed a letter critical of UBC's handling of the case and demanding procedural fairness for Mr Galloway. That letter, in turn, was

criticized by other Canadian writers for its perceived neglect of the complainants. “I felt the letter largely prioritized Steven Galloway’s damaged reputation and well-being, while siloing the complainants into a mere side note,” wrote poet Amber Dawn. Those who objected to asking for due process said the letter would serve to silence victims of abuse and promote rape culture.

Sources:

Marsha Lederman, “Steven Galloway's firing causes donor to rethink gift to UBC,” 28 September 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/steven-galloway-firing-causes-donor-to-rethink-gift-to-ubc/article32096764/?cmpid=PM17>

Marsha Lederman, “Canadian literary community calls for probe into Steven Galloway case,” 15 November 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/canadian-literary-community-calls-for-probe-into-steven-galloway-case/article32847244/>

Gary Mason, “New UBC president Santa Ono facing his first test with Galloway affair,” 15 November 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/new-ubc-president-santa-ono-facing-his-first-test-with-galloway-affair/article32869945/>

Margaret Wente, “The Galloway affair: Salem comes to UBC,” 22 November 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-galloway-affair-salem-comes-to-ubc/article32970624/>

Laura Kane, “Author Steven Galloway confirms sexual assault accusation in first statement after UBC firing,” 24 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/author-steven-galloway-confirms-sexual-assault-accusation-in-first-statement-after-mysterious-ubc-firing>

Marsha Lederman, “Under a cloud: How UBC’s Steven Galloway affair has haunted a campus and changed lives,” 5 January 2017, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/ubc-and-the-steven-galloway-affair/article32562653/>

Queen’s University: Photos of Queen’s students at a mid-November off-campus party made it onto the internet and sparked an investigation by university authorities. The students were dressed as Buddhist monks, Middle Eastern sheiks, Mexicans, and Viet Cong fighters. “These events undermine Queen’s ability to provide a welcoming and respectful campus environment,” explained the vice-president of the Queen’s Alma Mater Society, Carolyn Thompson.

“If we determine that this was a Queen’s sponsored or sanctioned event, we will take appropriate action,” a university statement read.

In the end, the students were not disciplined.

The student government at Queen's put on its best face and called the incident "an educational opportunity to engage all students in discussion about race and racism on Queen's.... Over the coming days, we will be engaging with the University, faculty society leaders, and diverse groups on campus. Our goal is to find an appropriate forum for this conversation to take place."

Queen's principal Daniel Woolf "acknowledged that the party had upset and degraded many students, and announced that he would be assembling an advisory task force to consult on the issue of diversity at Queen's," according to the student newspaper, the *Queen's Journal*.

Sources:

"Issues on race & cultural appropriation at Queen's attracts national attention: Costume party deemed racist online, AMS to hold forum on racism," 23 November 2016, [HTTP://WWW.QUEENSJOURNAL.CA/STORY/2016-11-23/NEWS/ISSUES-ON-RACE-AND-CULTURAL-APPROPRIATION-AT-QUEENS-ATTRACTS-NATIONAL-ATTENTION/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2016-11-23/news/issues-on-race-and-cultural-appropriation-at-queens-attracts-national-attention/)

Alicja Siekierskas, "Queen's University party costumes spark debate on campus: Photographs circulating on social media show students, most of them white, dressed as Middle Eastern sheiks, Viet Cong guerrillas and Buddhist monks," 23 November 2016, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/11/23/queens-university-student-party-sparks-controversy-over-racial-stereotypes.html>

"Queen's University investigates 'shockingly racist' student costume party: Alma Mater Society says such events 'undermine' school's ability to provide 'respectful campus environment,'" 23 November 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/costume-party-photos-queen-s-university-1.3863522>

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"Principal Woolf issues statement about off-campus party: After investigation by Provost concludes, Woolf announces new inclusivity-focused advisory group," 28 November 2016, [HTTP://WWW.QUEENSJOURNAL.CA/STORY/2016-11-28/NEWS/PRINCIPAL-WOOLF-ISSUES-STATEMENT-ABOUT-OFF-CAMPUS-PARTY/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2016-11-28/news/principal-woolf-issues-statement-about-off-campus-party/)

"On racism, diversity, and inclusion at Queen's: Some thoughts and a proposed course of action," 28 November 2016, <http://www.queensu.ca/connect/principal/2016/11/28/on-racism-diversity-and-inclusion-at-queens-some-thoughts-and-a-proposed-course-of-action/>

"Senate votes to take immediate action: Tuesday's meeting mainly focused on an appropriate response to diversity concerns," 1 December 2016, [HTTP://WWW.QUEENSJOURNAL.CA/STORY/2016-11-30/NEWS/SENATE-VOTES-TO-TAKE-IMMEDIATE-ACTION/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2016-11-30/news/senate-votes-to-take-immediate-action/)

“Students protest admin response to campus party: Protest group demands action from Queen’s,” 1 December 2016, [HTTP://WWW.QUEENSJOURNAL.CA/STORY/2016-11-30/NEWS/STUDENTS-PROTEST-ADMIN-RESPONSE-TO-CAMPUS-PARTY/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2016-11-30/news/students-protest-admin-response-to-campus-party/)

The Maple League: Lawyer Marie Heinen, head of the defence team for former CBC broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi, is to speak at Bishop’s University in February. Her talk will be live-streamed to St. Francis Xavier, Acadia, and Mount Allison.

Soon after the November announcement, St. Francis Xavier University student Jasmine Cormier wrote that the talk should be cancelled. “[T]he safety of students at this school comes first and foremost, and is more important than hosting a woman who has spent her career contesting women who are possible victims of sexual assault.”

Lucille Harper, director of the Antigonish women’s resource centre, agrees, for Ms Heinen’s successful defence of Ghomeshi “contributed to a culture . . . where survivors themselves are blamed for the violence.”

Ms Cormier’s arguments were rebutted by a student opinion writer in the 5 December issue of *The Xaverian Weekly*. Bishop’s University president Michael Goldbloom responded in the Montreal *Gazette* to calls to cancel Ms Heinen’s talk by writing, “We look forward to welcoming her on our campus.”

Sources:

“Upcoming speech by Jian Ghomeshi’s lawyer sparks debate: Toronto lawyer Marie Henein has been scheduled to deliver a speech to four Canadian universities in February,” 22 November 2016, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/11/22/speech-scheduled-for-ghomeshis-lawyer-sparks-debate.html>

Marni Soupcoff, “Canada’s institutions of higher learning are falling down on the job,” 24 November 2017, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/marni-soupcoff-canadas-institutions-of-lesser-learning>

Michael Goldbloom, “Why Bishop’s looks forward to welcoming Marie Henein,” 24 November 2016, <http://montrealgazette.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-why-bishops-looks-forward-to-welcoming-marie-henein>

“Henein: a perfect fit for the Maple League lecture series,” 5 December 2016, <http://www.xaverian.ca/articles/2016/12/5/henein-a-perfect-fit-for-maple-league-lecture-series>

University of Regina: Michelle Stewart, an associate professor of justice studies, is a member of The Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism, a group that succeeded in getting an author’s

book-signing event cancelled. The coalition persuaded first Chapters and then three hotels to back out.

The book, *When Police Become Prey: The Cold, Hard Facts of Neil Stonechild's Freezing Death*, by Candis McLean, takes issue with the claim that two particular Saskatoon police officers were to blame for Neil Stonechild's death.

"I was stunned that people would yield to political pressure," Ms McLean said. "Chapters told me they couldn't assure my safety."

In a statement, the coalition said it was pleased that Ms McLean's plans had been thwarted. "Her views about Neil Stonechild's death are not welcome here."

According to Christie Blatchford, on 4 November Dr Stewart wrote on Facebook, "Hey folks, happy Friday night. We have ONE last hotel to contact to get rid of Candis McLean's garbage book. ... Join me in calling the Quality Inn ASAP... "

Sources:

"Book that examines 'starlight tours' attracts protests: Author Candis McLean had four venues cancel her book-signing event," 5 November 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/book-promotion-cold-hard-facts-protest-regina-1.3838529>

Christie Blatchford, "Truth is, universities have never been champions of free speech," 26 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/christie-blatchford-truth-is-universities-have-never-been-champions-of-free-speech>

University of Alberta: From the same Blatchford article: "the University of Alberta law faculty announced it is investigating whether students who wrote a satirical article — meant as a funny piece, it depicted a fictional 'desperate drunk girl' and was merely dopey — have breached the school's code of conduct by perpetuating, and worse normalizing, dangerous stereotypes about women."

Source:

Christie Blatchford, "Truth is, universities have never been champions of free speech," 26 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/christie-blatchford-truth-is-universities-have-never-been-champions-of-free-speech>

Ryerson University: Henry Prada, an associate professor at the School of Social Work, stepped down from his position as the school's director after students accused him of racism toward black women. Dr Prada is alleged to have walked out of a meeting while a black woman colleague was speaking or being applauded.

According to the school's core values statement: "As a community of people connected to the School of Social Work we agree that we will address micro-aggression as it occurs and discuss how we might be implicated in acts of micro-aggression."

Though Dr Prada resigned as director, he did not apologize, as the protesting students demanded he do. Dr Prada has not said why he resigned or why he left the meeting; he has not commented publicly on the affair at all. Some of the students demanding an apology have now denounced the school for failing to discipline Dr Prada.

Sources:

Christie Blatchford, "Incident behind Ryerson anti-racism protests hardly black and white," 28 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/christie-blatchford-incident-behind-ryerson-anti-racism-protests-hardly-black-and-white>

"Black and Indigenous students protest School of Social Work," 29 November 2016, <https://theeyeopener.com/2016/11/black-and-indigenous-students-protest-school-of-social-work/>

Christie Blatchford, "Falling victim to school's 'obligatory blah blah' to human rights, a classic of modern Canadian university soft-think," 29 November 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/christie-blatchford-falling-victim-to-schools-obligatory-blah-blah-to-human-rights-a-classic-of-modern-canadian-university-soft-think>

Wilfrid Laurier University: Sandor Dosman managed the Veritas Café for the Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Student Association for nearly five years—until mid-December, that is, when he was fired. He had posted a job ad that began "I need a new slave (full-time staff member) to boss (mentor) around at Veritas Café."

Wilfrid Laurier supported the student association's action: "Given the importance that Laurier places on being an inclusive, welcoming and respectful community, the university supported the direction that the GSA chose to take. The university appreciates the challenges of dealing with confidential personnel and contract matters and we support the GSA in its efforts to reopen the café and rehire the affected employees."

Students and professors at WLU have been vocal in their criticism of the GSA but their efforts to have Mr Dosman reinstated have failed. Mr Dosman is now the culinary team manager for Fo' Cheezy Food Truck, in Waterloo.

Sources:

Laura Hensley, "Head of Ontario university cafe fired over jokey help-wanted ad seeking 'slave,'" 16 December 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/head-of-ontario-university-cafe-fired-over-joke-help-wanted-ad-seeking-slave>

Michael Piaseczny, Petition: “Bring back Veritas Café to Laurier Campus and Sandor Dosman,” 16 December 2016, <https://www.change.org/p/bring-back-veritas-caf%C3%A9-to-laurier-campus-save-sandor-dosman-s-job>

Greg Mercer, “Laurier graduate students group shuts down café over ‘slave’ joke in job ad: Veritas Café operator Sandor Dosman says he and 11 other employees lost their jobs after the tongue-in-cheek ad was posted,” <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/12/16/laurier-graduate-students-group-shuts-down-caf-over-slave-joke-in-job-ad.html>

Lukas Mikelionis, “Students Shut Down Campus Café After Joking Ad for ‘Slave’ Employee,” 16 December 2016, <http://heatst.com/world/students-shut-down-campus-cafe-after-joking-ad-for-slave-employee/>

Kate Bueckert, “Wilfrid Laurier University Grad Student Association blasted for terminating café operator over help wanted ad,” 16 December 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/wilfrid-laurier-university-gsa-cafe-veritas-contract-1.3900665>

University of British Columbia: In the last days of December, UBC rescinded its invitation to John Furlong to give the keynote address at a fundraising event for athletes, the ZLC Millennium Scholarship Breakfast, to be held 28 February. Mr Furlong oversaw the 2010 Winter Olympics and is chairman of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC, a professional soccer team.

Mr Furlong has been accused of sexually and physically abusing First Nations children. No allegation has been proven in court and some have been discredited. UBC dropped Mr Furlong when a sexual-assault activist complained, without, apparently, considering that Mr Furlong has so far been vindicated in his denials of the accusations against him.

Gary Mason, in the *Globe and Mail*, wrote: “The campaign against him has the palpable feel of a vendetta, and UBC should be ashamed of itself for participating in it. This decision shows UBC is a school with little moral spine, an intellectual wimp that is captive to moral arbiters who get their jollies from shutting things down.”

UBC president Santa Ono, who agreed to step in to give the keynote address, was unaware that Mr Furlong had been disinvited. President Ono has since apologized to Mr Furlong on behalf of UBC, and Mr Furlong has accepted his apology. Mr Furlong has asked donors to support the school.

President Ono’s statements regarding the events were for a while vague and weak. He originally said only that the athletics department made its decision in good faith (suggesting that the department wasn’t merely trying to avoid controversy by dropping Mr Furlong), but that the department erred in not considering how rescinding the invitation would affect Mr Furlong and his family. President Ono did not address the allegations on which Mr Furlong’s fitness was impugned nor did he invite Mr Furlong to participate in some other UBC event.

That changed on 9 January. “The British Columbia Civil and Supreme Courts have ruled in favour of Mr. Furlong in every matter that has come before them. The university had no basis to put its judgment above theirs,” President Ono finally said, as he reinstated Mr Furlong as the keynote speaker at the ZLC breakfast. “My strong hope is that we can now all move forward with Mr. Furlong delivering an inspirational address that will result in a memorable, uplifting experience for the audience and a highly successful fundraiser for UBC’s student athletes.”

In a *Globe* article from 9 January, Mr Mason reveals that after rescinding its invitation, UBC tried to get Mr Furlong’s people to claim that a scheduling conflict had forced Mr Furlong to decline. Mr Mason also wonders whether the decision to re-invite Mr Furlong is an attempt to placate disgruntled donors.

Sources:

Larry Pynn, “UBC cancels speech by John Furlong to avoid controversy over unproven abuse allegations,” 28 December 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/ubc-cancels-speech-by-john-furlong-to-avoid-controversy-over-unproven-abuse-allegations>

Christie Blatchford, “John Furlong’s sex-abuse trial by social media,” 30 December 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/christie-blatchford-john-furlongs-trial-by-social-media>

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