



PRINCIPAL AND
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Richardson Hall, Room 351
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6
Tel 613 533-2200
Fax 613 533-6838

April 16, 2019

We, as the representatives of Queen's University and its Faculty of Health Sciences (formerly the Faculty of Medicine), wish to convey our institution's profound regret for injustices enacted upon its Black medical students, alumni and prospective applicants in the period between 1918 and 1965.

In 1918, the Senate of Queen's University voted to ban students of African descent from attending its medical school. The Senate implemented the ban at the request of the Faculty of Medicine. This admissions ban excluded medical students of African descent from Queen's medical school between 1923 and 1965. In 2018, the university formally rescinded the Senate resolution that enabled the ban.

We acknowledge the responsibility to speak for the institution, whose actions of 100 years ago play a role in racial inequity in the medical profession today. We want to acknowledge the specific racist acts committed by the institution, and the repeated failures of the university to hold itself accountable. Specifically, we apologize for the following:

- The university's official ban of Black students from medical training set a unique Canadian precedent coinciding with a multi-decade collapse in the nation's training of Black physicians from the British West Indies.
- The university's efforts to apply pressure to Black students to leave campus in the immediate wake of the ban ended the medical careers of at least two upper-year students in good standing: Ethelbert D. J. Bartholomew, and David L. Harriot. These efforts appear to have irreparably disrupted the medical career of a third, Terry C. Thompson.
- The ban created a hostile campus climate for eight Black students who remained at Queen's after the ban was announced; these students were subjected to veiled racist threats and degrading mockery by fellow students in the months following the ban.
- The university repeatedly refused to consider the applications of Black students for admission to the medical school after the ban was announced.
- The 1964 testimony of two Queen's graduate students indicates that medical faculty members informally maintained the practice of refusing medical school applications from Black students until 1965 (although its Dean denied the existence of a colour ban at Queen's in 1964). No effort was made formally to rescind the Senate ban until 2018.

- The university misrepresented its efforts to assist students displaced by the 1918 ban. In 1918, the Dean of Medicine intimated that Black Queen's students might be placed at Dalhousie University, yet there is no evidence that any Queen's student directly affected by the ban ever transferred to Dalhousie University.
- The university placed blame for its discriminatory actions on the alleged prejudices of injured soldiers of the First World War Canadian Expeditionary Force, the population of the City of Kingston and the Board of Kingston General Hospital. None of these allegations was ever substantiated.
- The university's historical handling of its medical school history contributed to the development of unhealthy norms, values, and beliefs about Blackness at Queen's. This was demonstrated by deeply hurtful acts, including the omission of references to almost all of the Black students and alumni who were directly affected by the ban.
- In 1978, the university was informed by Ethelbert Bartholomew's family that the ban had destroyed his medical career and that a transfer to Dalhousie University had never materialized. The university did not amend its long-held assertions, despite the family's documented evidence to the contrary.
- In 1988, the university's representation of the ban and its impact was publicly criticized by a historical scholar at the University of Waterloo. The merits of the critique were never addressed.
- The university ended the application of its racial ban in 1965, but did not formally rescind the Senate resolution at that time.

Careful archival research suggests that Queen's Faculty of Medicine enacted the ban against students of African descent with the goal of demonstrating adherence to discriminatory policies favoured by the American Medical Association (AMA), the body that rated medical schools in North America. The 1910 "Flexner Report," whose educational recommendations were taken up by the AMA, promoted a race segregation policy that was specific to students of African descent. Queen's racial ban was also specific to students of African descent. This prejudicial turn appeared contemporaneously with Queen's pursuit of funding that was influenced by AMA ratings.

One hundred years have passed, and we are ashamed to learn of our complete estrangement from a network of Black medical students who went on to positions of great prominence in the areas of politics, medicine and finance. We are now aware of the legacies of Black physicians trained at institutions that did not follow our unjust path and find ourselves to have been impoverished by our bias. We deeply regret this loss.

We are resolved to confront our past actions, and more fully to understand the meaning of the university's historical racism, including a commitment to identify its causes and consequences to the best of our ability. We understand that our actions have negatively affected students and prospective students. We understand that our past actions contributed to a broader North American pattern of denial-of-access to equal medical opportunities for Black practitioners and patients alike.

In reckoning with our institutional history, we are committed to acknowledging our failures and to learning from our mistakes. We will ensure that this episode of the university's history is acknowledged in a public space on campus. In doing so, we will integrate the lessons from this racist ban into the curriculum of undergraduate medical trainees, as part of their broader training on social bias and systemic inequality in medicine. We will also commit funding and resources to support the recruitment and training of Black medical students to address persistent under-representation within the profession. It is our sincere desire to confront this past, to learn from it, and never again to repeat it.

Sincerely,



Daniel Woolf, DPhil, FRSC
Principal and Vice-Chancellor



Richard Reznick, MD, MEd, FRCSC, FACS, FRCSEd (hon),
FRCSI (hon), FRCS (hon)

Director, School of Medicine
Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences
CEO, Southeastern Ontario Academic
Medical Organization