



The Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) Newsletter

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Message from the Chair of the Diversity and Equity Committee

by Ifeyinwa Mbakogu

The School of Social Work's Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) is committed to furthering the School's commitment to social justice by fostering students' commitment to activities that promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within and beyond classroom engagements.

In the 2019/2020 academic year, the Diversity and Equity Committee buttressed that commitment with events that were designed to resonate with and respond to the concerns of students who have been historically excluded, subjected to structural violence, and denied equal opportunity, while simultaneously providing an inclusive space for critical dialogue and mutual learning across students, faculty, institutions, agencies, and community groups.

The Diversity and Equity Committee focussed on three types of events as a testing platform to gauge students' needs and commitment. The first is the *Diversity and Equity Committee Students Meetings* that serve as an introduction to the Committee, its work, and its members, while providing a safe and confidential space where the voices of students from designated groups especially can be heard. The meeting is held three times in the school year—in the Fall, Winter, and Spring (for distance students on residency) terms. The second type of events are *Professional Development Workshops*, open to the entire student body, but prioritizing the experiences and expertise of social work professionals from designated groups. These workshops, offered simultaneously to campus and distance students, will cover a range of topics, including coping with the demands of student life, accessing institutional supports, understanding the requirements of professional practice, and job preparedness within the social work profession. The third type of event is the *Diversity and Equity Committee Conversation Series*, where social work students, faculty, professionals, and community members are invited to discuss issues relating to structural and social justice that hopefully widen and inform students' practice decisions.

Building on the diverse engagements of our students within the school year, and as an attempt to project and enhance their commitment to social justice, the Diversity and Equity Committee has added a newsletter to its core duties. With the Diversity and Equity Committee Newsletter, social work students are able to express diverse skills of communication and advocacy that enhance their social work careers. The DEC Newsletter allows students to reflect on their needs within the social work program and profession, share their projects and accomplishments, tell stories behind their participation in the Diversity and Equity Committee, claim ownership for their growth and learning, and offer students a platform to be published.

The 2019/2020 academic year was a busy period for the Diversity and Equity Committee. The academic year ushered in great commitment from faculty members and students; who made themselves available for meetings, organizing events, and partaking in events as speakers who drove the focus of the committee beyond its previous boundaries. There was also an increase in student membership of the Diversity and Equity Committee. As the Chair of the Diversity and Equity Committee, I commend and recognise this commitment and drive for social justice that will be promoted by the Committee's Newsletter.

The first Diversity and Equity Committee Newsletter is a reflection on our students and their journeys. This reflection is informed by their experiences within the Dalhousie University School of Social Work Programs, their involvement in DEC and other school, agency, and community activities and how these interactions shape their perspective of the world of present and future practice.

Who we are

The Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) is responsible for:

- Publicizing the School's programs for the purpose of recruiting students according to the School's Affirmative Action Policy
- Exploring and suggesting solutions concerning problems and issues associated with the School's policy of affirmative action (both on and off campus);
- Maintaining liaison with other school committees (by providing DEC representatives) to promote the interests of the members of designated groups;
- Assisting in admissions procedures for designated applicants;
- Promoting knowledge of affirmative action concerns within the School;
- Developing means of implementing the School's policy with respect to designated groups, and to take responsibility for operationalizing these when provided with adequate resources (e.g. educational supports for students, special projects, workshops and materials).

Currently, the School has two policies related to diversity and equity, the [Accommodation Policy for Students](#), [Student Accommodation Form](#), and the [Affirmative Action Policy](#). The DEC is working on developing other policies.

The membership of the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) is comprised of:

- Two faculty members, one serving as Chair;
- Three students, including students from the designated groups;
- Two alumni working in the community, with preference given to graduates who are members of designated groups;
- Representatives from designated groups when available.

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Policing Black Lives: What Collective Noise Can Achieve

by Tonya Hoddinott

On November 19, 2020, the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) had the pleasure of holding a panel on Policing Black Lives, drawing attention to the ongoing discrimination, violence and anti-black racist practices perpetuated against the African Nova Scotian community. Our panelists were Dr. Timothy Bryan, assistant professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Dalhousie University, Kate Macdonald, Outreach and Education Coordinator at South House on Dalhousie Campus, R. Connor Smithersmapp, a practicing lawyer and Founder of Racism-Free Transit Halifax, Bria Symonds, a social work student at Dalhousie and African Nova Scotia community advocate, DeRico Symonds, Co-Founder of Future Roots Halifax and Program Manager with the Halifax Municipality, and JJ Wilson, a social work student at Dalhousie focusing on education within African Nova Scotian communities. With their varied backgrounds in community organizing and activism, social work education, hate crime research and anti-black racism within Halifax Transit, our panel discussed the ways in which our socio-political structure was created to oppress and control Black bodies within our country and within Nova Scotia specifically.

An ongoing topic throughout the night involved the Nova Scotian Human Rights Commission findings from March 2019, which denounced street checks perpetrated by the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) as racist practices, with African Nova Scotian men stopped over six times more often than white males, and the recent ban of street checks (according to HRP's definition of street checks, not the African Nova Scotian community) in October. DeRico Symonds opened the event with the poem "The System is Bleeding," then directly addressed how African Nova Scotians were "not considered human" when our socio-political system was created. This historical exclusion of Black bodies in the enactment of our laws-directly impacts how they are enforced in the present day, and reflects how the police have been "rebranding and revamping" their policies to suit their own narrative, as Kate Macdonald addressed later in the night. Symonds went on to connect the timeline between the Kirk Johnson human rights case from 2003 to the recent street checks case, stating how street checks are an example of evident and inherent racism.

R. Connor Smithersmapp was our third speaker of the evening, further discussing our justice system's historical oppression of Black bodies, and the ongoing exploitation of free labour which now exists through the prison industrial complex. Building on themes addressed by our first two speakers, Smithersmapp spoke at length about how Canadian laws and legislation were created to control the movements of people of African Descent and to use their labour on plantations after slavery was said to be abolished. The next speaker, Bria Symonds, followed up the conversation by covering the school-to-prison pipeline within Nova Scotia that overwhelmingly affects African Nova Scotian peoples, and spoke of how inclusion within our educational systems will help put an end to these oppressive practices. Announcing herself a radical, Symonds expressed the difference between diversity and inclusion within educational spaces and how we all have a part to play in making these spaces safer for African Nova Scotian students specifically.

The second to last panelist was JJ Wilson, who shared a personal experience he had with the Halifax Regional Police as an African Nova Scotian male. He addressed how often African Nova Scotians must retell such traumatizing stories for other people outside the community to really "see racism" and how prevalent it is within their lives. The need to prove that racism existed, that it was not just in their heads, and that their suffering was in fact real and valid was repeated over and over throughout the night, a theme reflected in the ongoing battles to address racism within Halifax municipal frameworks to this day. Dr. Timothy Bryan's research on police reform and efforts to "protect communities from hate crimes in the midst of ongoing anti-black racism," were especially poignant given the tension in the room at this point. His insights on justice reform, the never-ending instances of anti-black violence across the media, and the ongoing fight to prove the legitimacy of anti-black hate crimes to our own police forces did indeed provide more questions than answers.

Each speaker reaffirmed the need to *ask* questions, *challenge* norms within our colonized spaces and structures, *demand* justice for the African Nova Scotian community, and *continue* these demands until we achieve true justice. This is certainly *not* too much noise about nothing.

Panel Discussion on 'Policing Black Lives: Is this too much Noise about Nothing?' (1)
Speakers:



Dr. Timothy Bryan



R. Connor Smithersmapp



DeRico Symonds



Kate Macdonald



Bria Symonds



JJ Wilson

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To Question and Disrupt: Challenging Our Ableist World

by Tatiana Portelli-Graham

To challenge ableist ideologies, a panel of (dis)Ability advocates spoke about their practice, research and first-hand experiences involving 'visible' and 'invisible' (dis)Abilities. A continuation of the Diversity and Equity Committee's (DEC) ongoing conversation series, the event was centred on enhancing the knowledge base of diverse experiences and encounters with (dis)Abilities. The panelists consisted of Judy MacDonald, the Director of the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University, Rose Singh, a social worker and social work instructor, and Melissa Myers, the Accessibility Advisor in the Office of Diversity & Inclusion within the Halifax Regional Municipality. Each of these women talked in-depth about their own experiences living with (dis)Abilities, their navigation of an ableist world, and how they are disrupting it.

Their messages were clear—the system that our society is built on is only advantageous to those that are not marked with a (dis)Ability. Living with a (dis)Ability comes with social, financial, and physical limitations that require transformations that some are not able to access. These transformations are evaluated as accommodations which are seen as advantages that allow people with (dis)Abilities to “get away with something,” forcing them to prove they deserve a chance at being treated as equals.

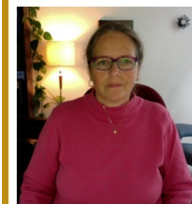
Judy MacDonald encouraged the audience to examine their surroundings to see how many people living with (dis)Abilities can be found in public places, such as at work or in educational institutions. One will find that there is not a large representation in public spaces, not because having a (dis)Ability is rare, but because the infrastructures necessary for people with (dis)Abilities do not exist. She spoke about how we need to change the attitudinal structures within these organizations through increased representation and stronger policies. (Dis)Abilities add a complex layer to how we design certain policies and procedures; these barriers not only block a group of people from certain experiences, but they also block organizations from an untapped resource.

Melissa Myers spoke of her own course of disruption within the job market, challenging institutions on how they accommodate those with (dis)Abilities. Accommodations need to start at the beginning of any process: how jobs are advertised, how one can apply to open positions, continuing through to the recruitment and selection process. Myers also spoke about how people with (dis)Abilities are scared of applying or self-disclosing because they do not want to be stigmatized or feel undervalued, indicating that the current climate does not allow for individuals to feel that they can disclose personal information and ask for assistance.

Rose Singh explained how we are quick to pathologize those with (dis)Abilities, isolating their problems and accommodations rather than improve the overall system. We need to start building a culture of belonging for everyone, which starts by systematically dismantling inhibitive procedures and building accessible spaces. Instead of forcing individuals to go through the mentally exhausting process of asking for help and then expecting them to act on burdensome mandated policies, which can lead to devastating results, we need to be proactive in creating accessible and inclusive environments.

The panelists painted a picture of how people with (dis)Abilities are systematically being excluded and being forced to go through hoops just for accommodations that they require using their first-hand experiences as evidence. They explained how they disrupted these systems and how they were successful in their endeavours, even though the work that had to be done to be successful took a lot of time and energy. The panelists taught us that we must fight and disrupt to make the world more equitable, but we also have to question current processes to see what changes we can make. So, ask yourself: What policies and practices can you encourage to make the world easier to navigate?

Panel Discussion on: '(dis)Ability: Diverse Voices, Situations, Challenges and Interventions' Speakers:



Judy E. MacDonald, PhD



Rose Singh



Melissa Myers

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My Invisible Strength

by Kristina Fifield

I have lived with Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes since I was a kid. I personally have never self-identified as having a disability. I have tried to hide it most of my life as I have had first-hand experiences of people judging me, having, and making assumptions about my disease. I remember when I was small, and kids would say that I needed needles and had to test my blood sugar because my parents fed me too much candy. As I grew older, everyone confused my Type 1 Diabetes with Type 2 Diabetes and thought that my lifestyle choices resulted in me getting diabetes. I have been exhausted by trying to educate people about this over the years. At times, I have felt I needed to defend myself and set some people in my life straight about my reality.

In the summer I saw an article about how individuals with Type 1 Diabetes need to make approximately 240 more decisions a day than the average person. I felt it was the first thing that finally made sense to me after living for twenty-seven years with this disease. Everything I do in a day impacts my Diabetes—stress, the food I eat, exercise, sleep, and sickness. My body requires six needles a day to continue to work without shutting down all of my major organs and dying. Except for my parents, no other person has ever asked me about what it is like to live with Diabetes and how it impacts my life. Rather, people tell me what I should be doing to live a longer life.

I can tell you that regardless of how many other responsibilities I have in my life, nothing involves or consumes more of my attention. I am very competitive, and I have always been afraid to let others know about my Type 1 Diabetes because I worry that they will think I am weak. I know that there is no winning for me in this area of my life. People too often think I have it all together, but really, they have no idea how this disease impacts me daily. I have fear about what might happen. Most people sit down and just eat their food. For me, it involves calculations, food measurements, glucose testing, and insulin.

As a child I was terrified about what health care professionals would tell me about being a “bad diabetic.” Having been told I may go blind and lose limbs if I did not take care of myself is something I still think about a lot. I am not a person who gets stressed often, however; routine eye examinations cause me a lot of anxiety and stress. In the past, I have canceled my appointments at the last minute out of fear. I do not have any issues with my sight, but the unknowns play on my mind and I know it could be a reality I face later in my life.

When I was thirteen years old the doctors wanted to give me an insulin pump. I said no; I did not want people seeing I was a Type 1 Diabetic. The doctor discussed the benefits that a pump would provide me. I did not care. I refused. I am now thirty-three years old and I still feel the same way. This past summer I got a glucose sensor and it is attached on the back of my arm. I still hide it most days. I usually do not care about what people think, but I feel I have always protected my disease from people. When I am asked “what is the one thing you cannot live without,” the answer for me is insulin. No matter how much I try, I cannot fix this. It is very frustrating when you try so hard each and every day, and sometimes your blood glucose levels will not stay in range. No matter how hard I try at times, I feel as if I fail at this part of my life. It has taken me many years to be fair to myself and to be kind to myself around my Diabetes.

I personally hate the word “disability.” My Type 1 Diabetes has made me so strong and makes everything else I do in my life look effortless.

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Lifting the Veil of Canadian Privilege

by Tatiana Portelli-Graham

Growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood, void of non-white culture, my childhood left me blissfully ignorant to my own privilege and its power within my community. Canada was and is viewed as the pinnacle of multiculturalism, the country that accepts and invites all cultures with open arms, which lends itself to the tendency to understand racism from a birds eye view, when in reality there is a more entrenched form of racism that is inherent within our society. It was only until my own world was shaken up that I realized how powerful these structures were in creating marginalization. My little brother grew up in the same neighbourhood that I did, but he has faced significantly more intolerance at only six years old. Coming from both Black and White heritages, he has been told that he is different. In our community he is more easily isolated, recognizing that he is different from everyone else. My brother did not see any differences that set him apart from others until someone decided to tell him that he was coloured and therefore different. When he came home that day, I was enraged and shocked that someone within my community believed that they had the power and mindset to share this ideology with my brother. My shock was based in my own privilege and my understanding that society was only explicit in racism. My privilege acted as blinders to this camouflaged form of oppression, where, living in the majority, I was not able to comprehend the entire scale of alienation based on difference. This was the first moment that I realized that Canada was not as equitable as I had once believed.

Canada's history is taught across the country as one of discovery, adventure, and improvement, but this rendition is true only after it has gone through a forceful cycle of sanitization that strips away the facts of bigotry. The truth is, our country's history is based on centuries of decimating divergent cultures and the assimilation of peoples into a Euro-Christian society, which continues to govern how our society and state are run today. This cultural genocide that happened within our nation is not prioritized as knowledge; instead, our educational systems have prioritized historic examples that help to reinforce a dominant Eurocentric view that contributes a general misunderstanding and naiveté of our communities.

As I learned about these divisive techniques, my pride for my country, my background, and my overall sense of identity became less straightforward. Canada was built on a system of social divisions based on race, gender, religion, class, and other "isms," which left me questioning who this made *me* as someone who is rooted in the dominant majority, and how I have contributed to this systemic suppression of marginalized populations. My own privilege shielded me from seeing the oppressive nature which surrounded the people of my own community.

My identity as a proud Canadian was quickly shaken to become one as an oppressor and this uncomfortability is my privilege being reflected back onto me. So how does one move forward from this? It is to accept that we live in a society that is embellished with systemic hierarchical divisions that provide individuals with privileges based on an antimeritocracy. It is to become aware of the cognitive dissonance that forms once we accept our position and then we must resist the desire to exonerate ourselves from the problem. Once we accept this truth, those with privilege need to flip this innate power back onto itself. Standing still in the shame of my heritage means that I am not allying myself with those who are being treated unfairly. We become allies once we use our undeserving advantages to challenge the oppressive systems that we live in. Canada is a country that prides itself on its multicultural foundations, social service systems, and progressiveness. We do not need to lose our pride for our country—we need to reconcile our past, challenge ourselves today, and work towards a fairer future. This uneasiness that we feel as settlers in Canada is not the problem that we should be addressing: oppression is.

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Social Justice and the Unacknowledged Bystander Syndrome

by Ifeyinwa Mbakogu

I arrived Halifax in September 2017 to teach at the Dalhousie University's School of Social Work. I was laden with dreams that remain too weighty to be completely offloaded. Every day I step into the streets of Halifax, and the people I meet and the activities surrounding their lives inspire intense reflections that impact my life and arm me with new knowledge that I share with my students to influence their practice decisions.

I take the Halifax public transit daily from my residence to work, regardless of stories that abound about racism, violence, and aggression. I witness these problems daily (as do many inhabitants of Halifax and Canada); sometimes, I may be the victim, at others, it could be another person's turn. With each daily experience, I wonder why I remain faithful to the enterprise of public transportation to which I have no investment.

I boarded the bus on a chilly night in December, quite close to Christmas Eve. At that time of night, there are usually lots of passengers and limited seats on the bus. However, surprisingly, on this night, there were several unoccupied seats. I made my way to the rear of the bus. Seated in front of me were three persons: a man and woman who appeared to be a couple and another man, their friend. The window right by me was open, bringing in chilly and uncomfortable winds. I immediately shut the window. And when I was doing this, the woman made to hold back my hand, ranting that she boarded the bus first and that I had no right to close the window. I ensured that the window remained shut while explaining to her as calmly as possible that it was cold, and the windows had to remain shut. She released her hold on that window but resorted to saying unprintable things about me. I remained calm, never uttering another word. Thereafter, she went ahead, opening the windows in front of me, sending chilly air around the rear of the bus and beyond. I ignored her antics.

Though the woman's voice was extremely loud, it was apparent, the driver could not hear what was going on. I could have called out to the driver at different bus and traffic stops but I did not, because my attention was unconsciously focussed on the few fellow passengers at the rear of the bus. Several passengers boarded the bus, listened to the stream of curses directed my way for a more than 45-minute trip, but they tried not to look my way, sometimes looking sad, nodding their heads, or looking at the three passengers in shock. But despite these expressions, *they said nothing*, and *they did nothing*. They allowed the rain of curses to continue and when they got to their bus stops, they alighted in a hurry.

At one point, the young woman got so agitated that she took out a knife, raised it in the air, and ran her fingers across its sharp edges with a creepy expression on her face. I remained sitting right behind her, never saying a word, watching as my fellow passengers looked from the knife to the woman and with their heads bowed to me, as if waiting for the next line of action. Nothing happened, because her friends quickly grabbed the knife from her, warning her about the consequences of being found with such a fierce looking blade on the bus.

We continued in this state, with the woman cursing about needing fresh air and being denied it by me, until they arrived at their bus stop. The three passengers departed, throwing the last bit of curses my way. By this time, I was sitting with new passengers, who had no idea of the genesis of the problem.

When we arrived at the bus terminal, I went over to the driver to narrate my experience on the bus. He was visibly upset that I did not let him know what I went through earlier and apologised for the apparent trauma of the experience. I did wonder if he ever tried living in my world, or tried to imagine the many terrible things that could have happened to me had I made my way to *the front of a bus in motion* to narrate my ordeal or call out to him from the *rear of the bus* to stop the bus and come to my aid.

I included this experience in the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) newsletter for several reasons. Most times, we assume that we are not implicated in the oppression or trauma experienced by others, because we ourselves do not inflict the pain or restrict access to services. The bystander syndrome rationalises how we partake in or prevent structural violence and exploitation inflicted on marginalised persons especially. Bystanders or witnesses helping behaviour is directed by: how they access the situation (an emergency, requiring expert or lay attention); the benefits or outcomes to helping (does it benefit them or benefit others); the social influences, expectations or norms influencing the nature of assistance provided; and whether bystanders consider it their responsibility to assist—basically, whether assistance should be provided by *other* bystanders rather than by themselves. How many times have we stood aside and watched as people become victims of oppressive policies, acts, or programs, while we watch, listen, sometimes show emotions, and do nothing? Just one word, or one show of support, could be the change needed at that moment. My experiences taking Halifax public transit and my interactions with people on my bus rides have provided several teachable practice moments.

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My Experience During the Dal Social Work Residency 2019

by Bukky Ogunfowora

My name is Bukky Ogunfowora. I am an African Canadian who migrated from West Africa, Nigeria, over ten years ago. I earned my first degree and worked for fifteen years as a banker in Nigeria before moving to Canada. I presently work at a Non-Governmental Association (NGO), where we support seniors in the community with socialization. For the past ten years, I have coordinated children, ages two to twelve, at a local Church, where the focus is to groom them to become game changers through various programs. I also volunteer in my communities in various roles.

Becoming a social worker comes at a high price for a distance student, who is also a full-time employee and a mother of four lovely kids. Getting ready for my residency was a major project I was able to achieve in 2019. Flying from Calgary in Alberta on the 5th of May, 2019 was the first step. I boarded the plane with one of my classmates, Monique. We sat beside each other; unaware we were heading for the same location until the end of the flight. While we were looking for a taxi to take us down to the hostel, I asked her if she was a distance student arriving for her residency, and upon her positive affirmation, we chartered a taxi with one other classmate, and our two weeks' journey began.

The start of our journey to the campus and seeing the scenery made me fall in love with this ancient city that is full of history. I sat in front with the driver and engaged him in conversation. He was amiable and ready to share his love for Halifax and told us why he calls her home. Lots of fascinating stories were shared till we alighted at our hostel. My first impression of Dalhousie University was, "I am writing a story on becoming an advocate for the less privileged in the society, becoming an ally to the marginalized—and it begins now." I was ready to explore the city, to begin the adventure of my life, and was looking forward to the first meeting with my Professor Dr. Marjorie Johnstone and other 74 classmates. My experiences from the first day of our residency to the last day were very informative and full of lots of learnings.

Getting to know most of the lecturers and the administrative staff was crucial to my experience. Waking up in the morning for class and joining the other classmates was fascinating. We made various visits to places like Africville, which was my favourite place due to the history attached to it, The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia where I discovered for the first time the slave route from my country of origin, Nigeria, and the impact of slavery on Black Canadians—the marginalization, segregation and racism that occurred. The different class activities were very impactful.

One of my highlights was the meeting with Dr. Ifeyinwa Mbakogu, whom I had been in contact with before the residency. Meeting her and seeing her passion for community engagement and teaching African Canadian students made me feel at home with her. The discussion on the Diversity and Equity Committee's (DEC) aspirations and how as a distance student I could be part of the committee's various



Ogunfowora standing by a poster at the School of Social Work



Ogunfowora beside the DEC posting board at the School of Social Work

activities was encouraging, and this led me to my first mini-project with Dr. Mbakogu. This was the transformation of the DEC information board from what it was, which was just a plain old board with no captivating caption or distinct information to show what it was meant for, to a better and welcoming board. I am sure it would continue to be a center of attraction and education for many students. Working alongside Dr. Mbakogu and other DEC members, we transformed the board to a presentable and inviting information arena for our students.



(L) Standing by a model of the demolished Africville church building. (R) From left to right: Classmates Toyin Otiotio, Joan Spaulding-Williams, Social Work Professor Dr. Marjorie Johnstone and Ogunfowora.

My experience was overwhelming and rewarding regardless of the short residency period. Becoming a social worker and an advocate for the less privileged is a just cause that is honourable. As members of a helping profession, social workers need to be well informed about the histories that shape people's lives and why they react to circumstances the way they do. I am very privileged to be in this profession and to be studying from a reputable university with great lecturers who are always ready to influence students positively through their wealth of knowledge. In writing about my Social Work journey through life, this is just the beginning of my story, and I will continue to appreciate the short but memorable two weeks of my residency.

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My Experience: Social Work Residency Program 2019

By Oge Obiorah

I was a little nervous commencing the journey from Edmonton to Halifax for residency, especially because I had never been out of Alberta prior to that time. I met some of my classmates on the plane from Edmonton and we already started the bonding process. The flight to Halifax was smooth. We decided to take the bus to have a wider view of the city. We were dropped off in downtown Halifax and we took a cab to Risely Hall. Downtown looked so beautiful with all the drawings on the walls and the antique buildings. Halifax was totally different from Edmonton, as it has more color and this calmness about it.



Taking the ferry to Dartmouth. The smiles on our faces show that we were having a good time.



My classmate who became a great friend



Social Work students with a Faculty member



Weekend getaway to Cape Breton

The first day of class at the Mona Campbell Building was nerve-wracking; I struggled to put faces to the names I was already familiar with. I was also amazed to see how diverse my class was, with different people from different races. I expected to see fewer people of color but I was happy to see the diversity that existed in my class. The introduction of everybody in the class soon after created a sense of relief, with most of us being able to put faces to names and everyone got better acquainted with other people. It did not take long for friendships and groups to form and of course I gravitated more towards people from my home country, Nigeria, and some of my classmates that I was already in touch with prior to residency.

Some of my major highlights were learning about restorative justice—that people who commit crimes also need help; taking a tour bus with my class around the city, and visiting the Africville community and the Black cultural centre for Nova Scotia. It was

fulfilling to visit Africville and ask some of the surviving residents questions after learning about all that the community had to deal with in the past. We visited Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 and learned about its history and the immigrants that came through it. We reunited as a group and took a ferry ride from Halifax to Dartmouth. We took a car ride to Peggy's Cove with Jeff Hawrylak (RIP) as our driver and a trip to the Cabot Trail with a group of four students. We spent the night there and enjoyed the beautiful scenery and serenity. It was a very fulfilling experience to engage in all these activities with my classmates. It felt real; the feeling of being in an actual class with actual classmates. Participating in the Kairo's blanket exercise was thrilling. It exposed me to real-life scenarios of the experiences of the Indigenous population and I cried the whole time. We were so excited to learn about the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) that we made sure to take a picture by the information board.



*This was Memorial Day with a trip to Peggy's Cove.
This picture is a tribute to my friend and classmate,
Jeffrey Hawrylak.*



A farewell picture at Halifax Stanfield International Airport

The trip to Peggy's cove was impromptu; we had gathered at the common room for relaxation when one of our classmates said it was her birthday. We all decided to drive to Peggy's cove to honor her birthday. It was a fun experience. It is sad that Jeff, who had volunteered to drive the group, passed away five months after our residency program at Dal. May his soul rest in peace.

On our trip to the Cabot Trail, we explored so many smaller cities and stopped to take pictures of adorable scenery. It was a great experience. We slept over at a cottage on Cabot Trail and journeyed back to Halifax the next day. The Social Work Residency Program 2019 at Dalhousie was an amazing experience, because not only did it give me the opportunity to meet and interact with my classmates, I was also able to visit the city and all the historic places in Halifax. I participated in various exercises that impacted my knowledge a great deal. We learned from a broad group of experienced social workers with so much ease. The faculty and teaching assistants were very approachable and relatable, and I had an amazing time. I went back home feeling fulfilled—it was two weeks well spent.

Opportunities to participate in the Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC)

The Diversity and Equity Committee (DEC) is always looking for ways to remain in conversation with our students. Students are welcome to join the DEC and participate in our events (online participation is assured for distance students). We also welcome other involvement that includes:

- Invitation to students to attend and cover events (acting as moderators and sending notes of the events to the newsletter) hosted by the DEC.
- Invitation to students to contribute articles to the DEC Newsletter. The deadline for submission to the Winter Newsletter is July 15, 2020. Submissions should be sent to sswdec@dal.ca. The focus of submitted articles must align with the Diversity and Equity Committee's goal of promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within and beyond our student's classroom engagements.