



McGill University

Action Plan to Address Anti-Black Racism 2020-2025

Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

September 2020





Background and Context

McGill University is at a critical juncture for addressing its engagement with Black communities in Quebec, Canada, and worldwide. Notably:

- Global social and political mobilization challenging systemic racism calls all institutions – including universities – to action. We are urged to self-reflect and take action with a view to building campuses wherein Black students, faculty, and staff feel welcomed, respected, and capable of thriving.
- While the recognition of the need to do more and better for Black members of the University community is not new (see Appendix), in recent months, McGill community members have emphasized the urgency of action on this front.*
- McGill’s pending bicentenary renders questions about McGill’s engagement with Black communities even more pressing. We are called to study and acknowledge our institutional historic ties to slavery and colonialism, and enter our third century with a firm commitment to equity and inclusion.

*See: https://www.blackcanadianstudies.com/Recommendations_and_Report.pdf;
<https://www.blackfacultycaucus.mcgill.ca/statements>; and
<https://www.change.org/p/suzanne-fortier-replace-the-james-mcgill-statue-with-a-tree>



Background and Context

McGill's [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#), developed in broad consultation with stakeholders across the University, is oriented along five axes:

1. Student Experience
2. Research & Knowledge
3. Outreach
4. Workforce
5. Physical Space

This Action Plan to Address Anti-Black Racism tracks these five axes, deepening and elaborating on commitments within the EDI plan to confronting anti-Black racism.

Additionally, each Faculty will develop its own plan setting out local commitments to EDI, including commitments to addressing anti-Black racism.



Background and Context

While this Action Plan is aligned with the University's EDI Strategic Plan, it is critical to signal its distinctiveness, both in terms of its roots and rationale.

This Action Plan seeks to initiate a process of acknowledgement of our University's historic connections to the transatlantic slave trade and its enduring legacies. The trade in African persons between Europe and the Americas endured more than 400 years. It resulted in the enslavement of 10 to 12 million persons of African descent and cost millions of others their lives. Slavery in the Americas reached into all institutions established during colonial settlement, including Canadian universities.

The legacies of transatlantic slavery find reflection in ongoing racial subordination and systemic anti-Blackness as witnessed through persistent pejorative stereotypes about African and Black persons, as well as their stark underrepresentation in the workforce, in leadership positions, and in higher education.



Background and Context

This Action Plan to Address Anti-Black Racism is informed by:

- A series of reports and materials developed over time, which reflected how some Black and other racialized members of the community may experience isolation or discrimination (see Appendix).
- Insights shared in four Town Halls, two of which were reserved for Black McGill community members.
- Submissions shared by email following [the Provost & Vice-Principal \(Academic's\) announcement](#) of the creation of McGill's Plan to Address Anti-Black Racism.
- In-person consultations with:
 - Black Students' Network
 - Dr. Kenneth Melville McGill Black Faculty Caucus
 - McGill Black Alumni Association
 - Subcommittee on Racialized and Ethnic Persons

We thank these groups and their members for their important work over time, which has advanced equity on our campuses.





Background and Context

The contributions of the Dr. Kenneth Melville McGill Black Faculty Caucus (“the Caucus”) have been especially valuable to the process of crafting the present Action Plan. A Caucus subcommittee met and exchanged multiple times with University leadership to review the Action Plan’s development.

The Caucus’ [Statement](#), endorsed by the McGill Association of University Teachers (MAUT) and McGill’s Black student associations, has been impactful.

The Caucus’ Statement articulates three principal calls to action:

- 1) the creation of a Task Force on Transatlantic Slavery and Colonialism;
- 2) the setting of targets and timetables for recruiting Black faculty, students and staff, and accompanying support; and
- 3) the institutionalization of equity and representation for Black persons across McGill and in senior administration.



Background and Context

The University has responded to the Caucus' calls to action through various measures and commitments throughout this Action Plan, which will:

- 1) Investigate McGill's historic connections with the transatlantic slave trade;
- 2) set ambitious targets for Black students, faculty, and staff with accompanying, robust supports; and
- 3) institutionalize anti-racism efforts and resources, ensuring these are effectively deployed across our campuses by a central unit or office dedicated to anti-racism and equity.



Background and Context

Statements and submissions from the Caucus, and other McGill associations and community members, have served as a beacon for the crafting of this Action Plan. In the result, this Plan seeks to be bold and concrete in its directions and commitments.

While this Plan is the fruit of extensive effort on the part of many members of our campus community, it marks the beginning, and not the end, of the work required to address anti-Black racism. In this way the Action Plan is necessarily dynamic and iterative, calling for ongoing attention and effort. Taking up this commitment – with openness, humility, and determination – we look forward to the promise of a third century for McGill University marked by sustained excellence and greater inclusiveness.



Budgetary Commitment

This Plan commits to at least \$15M over five years. Measures for accountability and reporting are set out below (slide 42).



1. Student Experience



Student Experience

The McGill community has told us that:

- Many Black students experience isolation. This is linked in part to the underrepresentation of Black faculty and Black administrative leadership. It also relates to the underrepresentation of Black students at McGill.*
- Curricula in most programs do not reflect demographic diversity, notably the work of Black scholars.
- Black students can experience microaggressions, frequently inflicted by peers but also by teaching and other staff. This can have a profound impact on well-being.
- McGill's Black Students' Network (BSN) does extensive work in connection with peer support and organizing and financing activities for Black students; McGill should better support these activities.
- Campus support resources should be better equipped to respond to needs of racialized students.
- Students can find it difficult to know where and how to raise concerns about experiences of discrimination or isolation. Many can find the processes for raising such concerns complex and intimidating.

*While demographic information about our workforce exists, McGill has only collected census data on its student body in certain Faculties. A wider student demographic survey forms part of this Action Plan. See Action Item #1.





Student Experience – Action Item #1

McGill commits to:

Understand and analyze its student demographic landscape through conducting a **student demographic survey**. Survey data will be disaggregated to be able to discern the representativeness of specific racialized and ethnic groups (e.g., Black students). Analyses will be undertaken with reference to population data for Montreal, Quebec, and Canada.

Informed by these analyses, measures will be designed and deployed to enhance outreach and support for student applicants from McGill's most underrepresented student populations.

Timeline:

- Census data collection is underway as of Fall 2020
- Fall 2021: First census report, which will include: demographic data, gap analyses, and steps for addressing identified areas of underrepresentation
- AY2022-23: Implementation of targeted measures aimed at supporting applicants from our most underrepresented groups



Student Experience – Action Item #2

McGill commits to:

Expand **institutional supports** for racialized students.

Specific measures will include:

- Appointment of **at least one Wellness Advisor or Counsellor** in Student Services with expertise in connection with the psychological impacts of racism, including systemic and anti-Black racism.
Timeline: March 2021
- Appointment of a **Black Student Affairs Liaison** to facilitate the sharing of student concerns and questions with McGill’s administration and to provide Black students with guidance and information about resources and supports on and off campus.
Timeline: Effective immediately
- Extension of **administrative support and budget** for: Black Grad, Black History Month, Youth Day.
Timeline: Effective immediately



Student Experience – Action Item #3

McGill commits to:

Develop a **Student Leadership Program** through which current McGill students who self-identify as members of equity-seeking groups – particularly Black and Indigenous students – will be recruited, selected, and funded to lead outreach initiatives with high schools and Cégeps across the Montreal area that have strong Black and/or Indigenous student representation.

McGill students selected to take part in this Program will receive an honorarium/stipend and leadership training focused on: effective communication, setting and reaching goals, overcoming adversity, empathy, and empowerment.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Design of program
- Fall 2021: Launch of program and selection of first cohort of student leaders
- AY2022-23: Rollout of outreach programs within schools and Cégeps





Student Experience – Action Item #4

McGill commits to:

Develop an **online learning module on systemic racism**, modeled on the University's [*It Takes All of Us*](#) sexual violence learning program. This module will be mandatory for all members of the University community. It will aim to broaden and deepen our collective understanding of what systemic racism is, and how it can impact the experiences of racialized members of our communities.

Timeline:

- Spring 2021: Module development complete
- Fall 2021: Rollout to McGill community




Student Experience – Action Item #5

McGill commits to:

Enhance capacity within Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) to support the development of **inclusive pedagogies and curricular approaches** that foster the learning and development of our diverse community and a sense of belonging for all students, **without interfering with the freedom of individual instructors to determine the content of their courses**. This will occur through facilitated training and other resources for instructors and teaching assistants and through [SKILLS21](#) programming within TLS.

Timeline: Spring 2021: Development and delivery of training



2. Research & Knowledge



Research & Knowledge

The McGill community has told us that:

- A study of McGill's history, which engages openly with our institutional connections to the transatlantic slave trade and which brings to light the contributions of McGill's Black community members over time, is necessary.
- McGill's African Studies Program would benefit from greater attention and resources. Relatedly, some have called for a study into whether this Program might grow into a Department of its own with an expanded scope that would include African Diasporic and/or Black Canadian Studies and that would broaden its reach beyond undergraduate courses to include graduate-level opportunities.
- The University will benefit from creating opportunities to showcase scholars whose work engages with their disciplines from a critical race perspective.



Research & Knowledge – Action Item #1

McGill commits to:

Undertake an **expanded McGill history project** that will investigate McGill's connections with the transatlantic slave trade. The project will engage a research team led by one or more historians with the requisite expertise to carry out this work. While ensuring that the project team enjoys the full measure of independence and academic freedom in conducting its work, methods of engagement with the Black communities of McGill and Montreal will be established to ensure that the contemporary meaning of the history is well understood. The project will result in a public report setting out historic findings, which will inform further work to address anti-Black racism.

This project will complement work currently pursued by McGill's [Provostial Research Scholars in Institutional Histories, Slavery, and Colonialism](#).

Timeline:

- Winter 2021: Announcement of commissioned historian(s)
- Winter 2022: Completion and publication of report



Research & Knowledge – Action Item #2

McGill commits to:

Become a member institution of the **Universities Studying Slavery (USS)** network. In so doing, McGill will join institutions from around the world committed to earnest and open studies of their past with a view to addressing contemporary inequities. Membership and engagement with the USS network will broaden McGill's networks with institutions undertaking these critical explorations, opening prospective research opportunities and partnerships.

Timeline: Fall 2020



Research & Knowledge – Action Item #3

McGill commits to:

Establish a **Provostial Visiting Fellowship-in-Residence on Black Life and History**. This initiative will welcome to McGill, each year, a leading Black scholar whose research focuses on Black life and the Black experience, whether historically or in contemporary society.

Application and selection oversight will occur through a collaborative process that involves the Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic) and the Dr. Kenneth Melville McGill Black Faculty Caucus. Fellows may be selected from any discipline and will be welcomed within the Faculty most closely related to their discipline for one or two academic terms.

Fellows will give a keynote lecture during their time at the University.

Timeline:

- Winter/Spring 2021: First call for applicants
- AY2021-22: First Fellow welcomed, inaugural lecture

Research & Knowledge – Action Item #4

McGill commits to:

Enhance support for our **African Studies Program**, notably through:

- Provision of an annual budget to fund guest speakers, workshops, and student-led activities
- Provision of an annual budget to *Uhuru: The McGill Journal of African Studies*
- Creation of a Working Group on African and Black Studies to explore options for the expansion of the Program's scope to include African diasporic/Black studies and to build its research capacity, including through the creation of associated graduate programs
- Support of research innovation and excellence in the domains of African and Black Studies in the context of federal and provincial research funding programs, including the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and, where applicable, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Programs

Timeline: Effective immediately

3. Outreach



Outreach

The McGill community has told us that:

- Situated within Montreal, McGill University can and should do more to connect actively with its surrounding communities, including the Montreal Black community, so that our campus can better reflect our city's strong demographic diversity.
- Our University must develop concrete strategies to enhance Black student access to McGill, notably by working with local high schools and Cégeps that have strong Black representation.
- McGill has a vibrant and successful Black alumni community committed to enhancing Black student access to, and success within, McGill. The University thus should actively recognize and support the efforts of our Black alumni.
- Creating opportunities for discussion and debate on the most pressing and challenging questions of diversity would be of crucial benefit for both the McGill and Montreal communities, and thus should involve stakeholders from both.

Outreach – Action Item #1

McGill commits to:

- Work, through University Advancement, with our alumni and donor communities to **increase scholarships and student aid opportunities** that will enhance supports for students – at the undergraduate, Master’s and doctoral levels – from McGill’s most underrepresented student demographic groups.

Timeline: Effective immediately

- Create a **fund earmarked to support Faculty-level initiatives** tied to recruitment, outreach, and engagement focused on widening demographic representation within McGill’s student body.

Timeline: Effective immediately

These efforts will be informed by the results of McGill’s student demographic survey (see Student Experience – Action Item #1). They will complement the Student Leadership Program (see Student Experience – Action Item #3).



Outreach – Action Item #2

McGill commits to:

Support the **McGill Black Alumni Association**, through a fixed annual budget, to develop a mentorship program for Black students that would allow the MBAA to:

- Develop and maintain its website
- Host events centred on mentorship that match current students and alumni
- Support events for Black alumni, especially during Homecoming celebrations

Timeline: Effective immediately



Outreach – Action Item #3

McGill commits to:

Create an **Advisory Panel on Black Student Life**, with a mandate to advise on decision-making with University leadership on key areas affecting Black students at McGill, including community outreach and support. Membership will include Black faculty, students, and staff, as well as representation from the McGill Black Alumni Association and the Black communities of Montreal and Quebec.

Timeline: Panel will be created by Winter 2021



Outreach – Action Item #4

McGill commits to:

Explore **partnership and exchange opportunities** with:

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
- Institutions of higher education in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), notably the University of the West Indies (UWI)
- Institutions of higher education in Africa

Timeline: AY2020-21: Outreach to key institutions to explore and determine partnership possibilities



4. Workforce



Workforce

The McGill community has told us that:

- Like Black students, Black faculty and staff can struggle with experiences of isolation given their low representation within McGill's workforce.
- Although McGill has developed strong employment equity protocols, these have not integrated strategies focused on recruitment of Black staff – both academic and administrative and support staff.
- Mentorship, support, and networking initiatives are needed for faculty and staff from underrepresented groups, especially Black faculty and staff.
- McGill community members charged with managerial and hiring responsibilities – including Deans, Chairs, and managers – will benefit from further training on topics such as systemic discrimination, systemic racism, and responding to unconscious bias.

Workforce – Action Item #1

McGill commits to:

Increase its **complement of Black tenure-track and tenured professors**. Currently, 14 tenure-track and tenured professors at the University self-identify as Black in McGill’s employment equity survey. This represents 0.8% of our tenure-track and tenured academic staff.

While labour-market availability cannot be discerned specifically for Black populations (since census data for “visible minority/racialized” persons are not disaggregated), a hiring target can be set by relying on Canadian census data. As such, McGill will set a target of 85 Black tenure-track or tenured professors (5%) by 2032,* with an interim target of at least 40 Black tenure-track and tenured professors by 2025. These colleagues will be recruited across disciplines and academic units.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Strategic academic recruitment initiatives to be established
- Implementation and pursuit of initiatives over duration of this Plan

* This target date aligns with that set for target Indigenous representation of tenure-track and tenured faculty in the [Final Report of the Provost’s Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education](#).

Workforce – Action Item #2

McGill commits to:

Support the **well-being and success of Black and other racialized academic staff** notably through:

- Extension of a budgetary commitment to the [Dr. Kenneth Melville McGill Black Faculty Caucus](#) (“the Caucus”)
- Semi-annual meetings between the Principal, Provost, and the Caucus
- Creation of a mentorship network open to all academic staff, with the expectation of a disproportionate benefit for members of underrepresented groups
- Ensuring that hiring units are aware of, and encouraged to deploy, the University’s robust recruitment and retention protocols, including spousal appointment processes
- Analysis of demographic representation within salaried ranked Contract Academic Staff, accompanied by the setting of targets, measures, and timelines to address identified gaps

Timeline: Effective immediately

Workforce – Action Item #3

McGill commits to:

Work to increase the **representation of, and career opportunities for, Black administrative and support staff**, notably through:

- Setting population-based workforce targets for M-level and Executive staff. Black M-level and Executive staff currently represent 3.4% of that cohort at McGill. The following targets are set:
 - 5% representation by 2025
 - 6.8% representation by 2032
- Outreach with Black community groups and networks in hiring initiatives
- Training to enhance recruitment, interview, and selection practices
- Enhanced onboarding and mentoring for new hires
- Exploring mentoring and reverse mentoring/networking opportunities for students and staff with Black alumni and the larger Montreal community
- Delivering equity and anti-racism training for all HR professional staff, including HR Advisors, as well for senior management staff
- Review of policies and practices related to merit, retention, and promotion

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Strategic HR initiatives to be established and communicated
- Implementation and pursuit of initiatives over duration of this Plan



Workforce – Action Item #4

McGill commits to:

Develop more robust equity and anti-racism training and capacity-building for search and advisory committees for the appointments of the University's senior-most positions. The intention will be to cast wide nets, worldwide, as part of all executive searches to yield candidate pools consistently characterized by excellence and diversity. The ultimate aim is to build diversity, including racial diversity, within McGill's senior leadership.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Institute enhanced training and practices within all executive search and advisory committees
- Beginning in Spring 2021: Annual reporting on efforts and results in relation to this action item



5. Physical Space



Physical Space

The McGill community has told us that:

- Black members of the McGill community do not see themselves reflected in iconography across our campuses.
- The University presents itself as glorifying James McGill through its representation of him on our physical and virtual spaces, which fail to account fully for his activities in connection with slavery.
- Black students would benefit from activities and space to convene and network, facilitated by the University.



Physical Space – Action Item #1

McGill commits to:

Establish a **Campus Planning Working Group on Recognition and Commemoration**. This Working Group will be mandated to examine issues of representation in the execution of the McGill Master Plan, particularly with reference to Black and Indigenous presence on campus.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Creation of subcommittee and approval of mandate and terms of reference
- AY2021-22: Launch of subcommittee activities



Physical Space – Action Item #2

McGill commits to:

- Install, for the time being, a **plaque next to the James McGill statue** on lower campus, which explains who James McGill was, including his connections to, and involvement with, the transatlantic slave trade and his ownership of enslaved peoples.
- Assess and determine the statue's **most suitable setting** – including its location and necessary contextualizing information – as McGill enters its third century.

Timeline:

- Fall 2020: Plaque installation
- Decision about the statue by the end of the Bicentennial year



Physical Space – Action Item #3

McGill commits to:

Convene a working group to explore and make proposals that would draw on the **Bellairs Research Institute** as a site to further research and learning in connection with topics such as: Barbadian-Canadian relations, Caribbean studies, slavery studies, post-imperial studies, sustainability studies, and the blue economy.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Working Group convened, terms of reference set
- AY2021-22: Working Group report submitted




Physical Space – Action Item #4

McGill commits to:

Create a **living website** modeled on [Blazing Trails: McGill's Women](#) to showcase the presence and success of Black McGillians over time.

Timeline: Spring 2021: Website created and online



Physical Space – Action Item #5

McGill commits to:

Consolidate and enhance University resources dedicated to: anti-racism **education**, **support** for racialized members of the McGill community, community **outreach**, and **response** to incidents of racial discrimination. The University administration and members of the McGill community will together determine the structure and mandate of a unit dedicated to such anti-racism initiatives.

Timeline:

- AY2020-21: Work with Black and other racialized members of the McGill community to determine this unit's structure and mandate
- AY2021-22: Decision and implementation



Accountable and Transparent Implementation

As measures of accountability and transparency, and in an effort to demonstrate openness to the evolution of this Action Plan's implementation, the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic) commits to:

- Begin work immediately on all action items set out in this Plan
- Hold at least three meetings annually with members of the Black community at McGill to discuss this Action Plan and its implementation
- Report annually to Senate and the Board of Governors on initiatives taken in relation to this Action Plan
- Create and maintain a website that monitors and tracks progress on each action item set out herein
- Oversee the development and implementation of Faculty-based plans to promote equity and address anti-Black racism



Conclusion

Members of McGill community have long shown their commitment to a campus that challenges inequities and discrimination. Still, there is much more work to do. Through this Action Plan, the University commits to an initial five years of concrete measures that will enhance equity and inclusiveness for all, especially for Black students, faculty, and staff.

While this Plan will be stewarded by the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), all members of the University community have a role to play in its successful implementation. Each of us is called to reflect on how we can better understand and confront racism, including anti-Black racism, through our engagements with one another and our work within our campus community.



Appendix

University reports that have previously examined issues of discrimination and racism:

- [The Report of the Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement](#) (2011)
- [The Results of the Survey on Diversity and Discrimination](#) (2016)
- [The Report of the Working Group on Systemic Discrimination](#) (2016)
- [The Report of the Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education](#) (2017)
- [The Report of the Working Group on the Principles of Commemoration and Renaming](#) (2018)
- [McGill's Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan](#) (2019)
- [The McGill University EDI Strategic Plan](#) (2020)