

December 14, 2010

Re: Motion for Toronto City Council to condemn Maclean's: Too Asian article

Dear Councillors of the City of Toronto,

On behalf of the 50,000 members of the York Federation of Students, we urge you to discuss and support the motion to condemn the article published by Maclean's entitled Too Asian. York University has one of the most diverse campuses in Canada, and we firmly believe that all of our members are valuable and deserving of a place in academia. In fact, this is one of the reasons that we continue to advocate for public, accessible education for all. Furthermore as students and elected representatives, we are particularly concerned about the underrepresentation of marginalized communities in post-secondary institutions. We seek to find solutions that will make higher education fully accessible to everyone, regardless of race, gender, class, language or ethnic origin.

It is equally concerning that the Maclean's article paints Asians as a homogenous identity. In fact, Asians, whether Canadian or foreign-born, are a heterogeneous group that represent a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities. The York University Campus is home to International students and a diverse community of commuter students, who have every right to participate in their academic endeavours free from oppression. Asian Canadians from many ethnic backgrounds have contributed to the foundation of our country and our city. This is history that we should embrace and be proud of.

According to this article, universities are a space created for the white, dominant population, and minority groups are taking away from their experiences. This notion is problematic, as it creates a divide on campuses that are seeking to build an inclusive community. As a city we must take a stand by publicly rejecting the racism perpetuated by this article. As a voter, a constituent and an elected student representative, I urge you all to support this motion. Already, the Cities of Victoria and Vancouver have passed similar motions, and several thousand Torontonians have expressed their concern and outrage for the blatant racism printed by MacLean's. It is imperative that leaders of any community, especially those that represent a community as diverse as Toronto, speak out and condemn the racist targeting of Asian Canadian's.

On behalf of the York Federation of Students and our 50,000 members, I want to urge the City of Toronto to follow the lead of Vancouver and Victoria in sending a strong united message to MacLean's that their values do not represent ours, and further, to request an apology for perpetuating racism and ethnic stereotypes about our communities.

Sincerely,

Darshika Selvasivam  
Vice-President Campaigns & Advocacy  
York Federation of Students  
Local 68, Canadian Federation of Students