

December 15, 2010

Dear Councillors of the City of Toronto,

On behalf of the 44,000 members of the University of Toronto Students' Union, we urge you to discuss and support the motion to condemn Maclean's magazine and join the community demand for an apology for its article "Too Asian". We further commend Councillors Mike Layton and Kristyn Wong-Tam for bringing forward this motion to City Council and for seeking to actively challenge racism within the media and our community space.

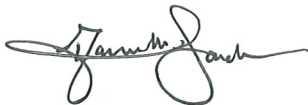
As a Students' Union, we serve a diverse community of students at the University of Toronto. We are dedicated to fighting for student rights and for a high-quality post-secondary education system for all. In doing so, we recognise the systemic barriers – including racism – that hinder marginalised communities from accessing the post-secondary education system, and actively work to ensure we challenge and eliminate these inequities.

As such, we reject the Maclean's article and its propagation of racist stereotyping and perpetuation of Anti-Asian sentiment within our university and community. The article continues a long history of Asians being depicted as foreigners within Canada, creating a distinction between Asians and Canadians; one that negates a century of settlement of Asian diasporas, and establishes an 'us' versus 'them' binary. This binary creates antagonism between Asian and white students in post-secondary institutions, where exclusive spaces at universities are perceived as being taken away from white students. The article also ignores the diversity of the Asian community; neglecting the various ancestral, ethnic, class, gender, religious, language, and sexual identities that exist. Let us be clear, this article portrays diversity as a threat to our society; its assertions are racist and should be rejected.

Members of the University community and community at-large have actively been participating in coalitions to organize critical masses and teach-ins, as well as writing letters and emails expressing their anger and upset. We have been connecting with communities across the country as this has become a matter of national concern. For our members and your constituents, this is not about being "too politically correct"; this is an issue of the fundamental inequities that exist within our society. We want our elected officials to denounce the offensive notions being espoused by Maclean's, and work to address systemic inequities through this motion and ongoing initiatives. We want you to reflect the ideals of diversity and inclusion we have as a community for our city with a commitment to anti-racism. We value the identities, lived experiences and contributions of all members of our community.

On behalf of the 44,000 members of the University of Toronto Students' Union, we encourage all of you to support this motion and be a part of the anti-racism movement in our society.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Sandhu', written in a cursive style.

Danielle Sandhu  
Vice-President Equity,  
University of Toronto Students' Union  
Local 98 of the Canadian Federation of Students

