

## Food for thought on Canadian campuses

### Black Studies in Teaching and Learning

The Canadian post-secondary landscape has finally (in some narrow ways at least) decided to take Black Studies seriously. Though there is a long way to go, the emergence of Black Studies programs at universities across the country alongside the partial implementation of the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Higher Education offers us a valuable opportunity to think clearly about what Black Studies is and can be. This vision was eloquently laid out for us at the 2023 STLHE Conference by Dr. Barrington Walker during his plenary session.

With increased institutional development, however, comes abundant risk. The values and intention behind the advocacy *for* Black Studies in the academy have an important and rich history. If we do not attend to that history, we risk missing a crucial opportunity. While a detailed exposition on the history of Black Studies is not suitable for a Snack Bite, one particular area of focus that risks being lost is in developing distinct pedagogical approaches oriented towards a liberatory praxis.

As Josh Myers notes in *Of Black Study*, the struggle for Black Studies always involved an articulation for the “living Black experience” that has involved organizing within and outside of academic spaces, as well as a “a tradition of study that rests upon the translation and recovery of different ways of knowing” (2023, 9–10, 13). In other words, how we teach and how we learn is crucial to understanding and fostering a perspective on the world that refuses white supremacy and colonialism; that engages a vision of life that is not governed by that which ails us.

Somewhere in this institutional development, this vital orientation has been lost. Though the Scarborough Charter echoes the call to centre teaching and learning in Black Studies and to prioritize student involvement, leadership and guidance in all program development, this advocacy has gone unheeded. Instead, Black Studies scholars approach this interdisciplinary terrain often navigating disciplinary silos, illegible to the departments and universities that are supposed to act as supports. We are often left to fend for ourselves, even as the challenges of teaching from this perspective mount amidst creeping austerity, right-wing backlash and a warped perspective on academic freedom that is often used to punish this exact style of scholarship.

We need a venue to share pedagogical approaches and navigate this uncertainty. This venue should centre authentic partnership with students - the very students responsible for the decades of struggle that has allowed our scholarship to exist and to flourish. Most importantly, this venue should be committed to enhancing the vision of Black Studies that prioritizes Life in its totality. To

this end, I would like to propose that we build a community of practice within STLHE – let’s call it the Black Studies Teaching and Learning Network. Let’s create a space where these conversations can begin, and see where it leads us.