

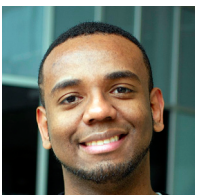
Grenfell Student Op/Ed: Kryston Munnings - February 26, 2019

Being a Black student in Newfoundland is not easy. I remember being told by a former classmate that my English was “very good for a Black person”. I was shocked that this person seemed to believe that Black people do not speak English, I remember the way this backhanded compliment stung me. It is not just this one encounter: It is the random people touching your hair without consent, the constant stares from people as you enter a room or walk down the street, and the frequent usage of the terms “n****a” or “n****r” in and outside the classroom.

As many others have learned, there is no amount of assimilation that can shield you from ignorance and racism in society. Growing up in a country that is predominately composed of racialized folks, I never felt out of place because of my race. However, moving here was a difference experience due to having something as – the kink of my hair or my Melanated skin – mark me as being marginalized and a racial minority. It can be overwhelming at times to be the only person of colour in a class full of White Students. It is a surreal experience opening my text-books and seeing pictures of White folks, and also engaging in a curriculum inundated with Eurocentric theories, philosophies and history that lacks cultural literacy: having little to no reflection with my racial identity.

For the longest time, issues faced by Black students on campus have been shuffled under the “International student” umbrella. There MUST be recognition that intersectionality exists! Black students are not just international students. Also, there has to be a conscious effort made to realize that not all Black students are international students. All of these factors need to be seriously considered in order to provide better services and support for Black students. This is why I founded the GCSU Black Student Caucus. This provides a safe space for the Black constituency on campus to act as a collective in advocating for our rights and to educate the campus community and Corner Brook community on the issues we face and how to properly find solutions to those issues. We are promoting Black History Month, where we are addressing the realities of Black struggle and excellence. There needs to be a campus-wide understanding that this is not something that just came out of the blue. This is rooted in our collective history, way back to slavery, and narratives that have omitted so many perspectives and power dynamics of race.

Black oppression is an underdeveloped and unresolved issue. By advocating for change, we hope our experiences as Black students no longer seem so isolated. In recognition of Black History Month, I urge Newfoundland’s post-secondary institutions to progress in the nurturing, appreciation, and preservation of ethnic and cultural diversity from Black students, faculty and staff. Even though the stories of our oppression, elation, and achievements are long-established, our voices must always be heard and taken into consideration.



Kryston, a psychology student, is a member of the university’s Board of Regents, and councillor at large with the Grenfell Campus Student Union. He also founded the Black Caucus. This Op/Ed submission is his perspective on the need for education and advocacy for the needs and rights of black students.