

To the Members of the Governing Board,

We, the undersigned members of the Junior Common Room, are writing to support the concerns raised by Dr. Alissa Trotz in regards to Margaret Wenté's appointment as a Quadrangler at Massey College. As a result of Ms. Wenté's consistent public displays of racism, sexism, and transphobia, we are calling for her immediate dismissal, the public release of the nomination letters and the minutes of subcommittee meeting of Governance and Nominating Committee that led to Ms. Wenté's recommendation as a Quadrangler, and an investigation into the processes that led to her appointment.

There are countless examples of Ms. Wenté publishing discriminatory views in her work as a journalist, some as recently as two years ago, before *The Globe and Mail* forced her to retire following numerous plagiarism allegations. These views include promoting a book that uses pseudoscience to justify harmful stereotypes about certain races. In another piece, she dismisses the prevalence of rape culture and blames survivors of sexual assault. Lastly, she believes that trans individuals, particularly young trans men, are suffering from undiagnosed mental illnesses. Please see the appendix below for more specific examples of Ms. Wenté's work. One may be tempted to dismiss Ms. Wenté's numerous gaffes and outright racism, sexism, and transphobia as harmless ignorance in the pages of *The Globe and Mail*, and now soon, perhaps, Massey College, but the venue is precisely the problem.

In allowing Ms. Wenté a platform, media outlets and now Massey College boost her claims and grant them legitimacy. At a time when academic and public institutions should be leading in discussions on how to tackle systemic anti-Black racism in Canada and globally, Massey is uplifting a figure who perpetuates conscious misinformation about racism. To allow Ms. Wenté into this space is to set the discussion back by decades. It also sends a clear message to Black and racialized Junior Fellows, survivors of sexual assault, and trans Junior Fellows that their lived experiences (and, in many cases, some of their most deeply painful life experiences) are now open for debate at the dinner table, in the common room, and in the halls of the place they call home.

Massey College is supposed to be a "unique, congenial and intellectual environment" where high standards of academic integrity are held and members of the Massey community from all disciplines can share ideas. However, those ideas must not threaten the welfare and safety of community members, nor amplify the historically inflicted harms against marginalized people. This sharing does not happen in a vacuum. As educators, researchers, and members of intersecting communities, we understand that our words and actions have an immense effect on the safety of others. As members of the Massey community, Senior Fellows and Quadranglers hold great power over who is accepted, supported, and heard at the University of Toronto and Massey College. They regularly interact with Junior Fellows, act as mentors, and serve on committees. As a result, their presence and influence can directly affect the lives and well-being of Junior Fellows as well as their experience at Massey College. We believe Ms. Wenté's presence at the College would be harmful to the Massey community; her presence would signal that our

community is not a safe or welcoming space to racialized and trans Junior Fellows, as well as survivors of sexual assault.

Massey College is an institution that was originally created to preserve and celebrate the economic, social, and cultural capital of upper-class white men while excluding others either explicitly or implicitly. In recent years, Massey has had several public incidents of anti-Black racism, which has led to several Black Junior Fellows choosing to not return to Massey College after just one year of being Fellows due to the hostility they have experienced. These experiences of hostility, as well as the appointment of Ms. Wenté as a Quadrangler, are not coincidental but rather the most recent manifestations of the exclusionary creeds upon which the institution was founded.

On Monday, Massey hosted an excellent edition of the Dialogues, in which Dr. Alissa Trotz, Dr. Lisa Robinson, and Junior Fellow Frank Otabor discussed the prevalence of racism in academia and the ways we can work to change the structures which uphold systemic racism. In addition, Principal Des Rosiers shared a draft for a Work Plan to combat anti-Black racism. The appointment of Ms. Wenté is an action which directly contradicts these attempts at anti-racist actions and makes us question the sincerity of the College's efforts to confront racism within its own walls. After Massey College reaffirmed its commitment to fighting anti-Black racism and all forms of discrimination, it is critical that the Governing Board upholds this commitment by withdrawing its acceptance of Ms. Wenté's nomination.

We also want to highlight our concerns regarding the demographics of the Governing Board (GB) that allowed this nomination to go through. As Dr. Trotz pointed out in her letter of resignation, she was the only Black member of the GB. At the meeting in which the list of nominees was approved, there were only three People of Colour, including Dr. Trotz and two Junior Fellows (one observing). Even if Ms. Wenté's acceptance was an oversight on the part of the GB, we think that this oversight would not have happened if there had been better representation on the GB, or if the election processes were more transparent, rigorous, and robust. The burden of fighting racial injustice, not only in this situation but also in many others at the College, should not fall on a singular Black Senior Fellow. While we could hope that the white members of the GB would be just as active in standing up for equity as Dr. Trotz was, the actions of the GB have shown that this is not the case.

As a result, the Junior Fellows are urging the Governing Board to move forward with the following calls to action to rectify this issue:

1. Immediately rescind Margaret Wenté's offer to join the College as a Quadrangler.
2. Issue a public apology to all members of the Massey College Community for appointing Margaret Wenté as a Quadrangler, while acknowledging that her appointment signalled to racialized communities, trans people, and sexual violence survivors that they are not welcome at Massey College. In this public apology, further acknowledge that this was another instance of ongoing systemic racism at the College, that Massey College has not come as far since 2017 as it should have, and that statements of solidarity do not solve structural issues.

3. Publish the nomination letters and the minutes of the subcommittee meeting of Governance and Nominating Committee that led to Ms. Wente's recommendation as a Quadrangler. The Head of the Quadrangle Society should also release a public explanation as to why Ms. Wente was recommended.
4. Review the processes that lead to the approval of nominated Senior Fellows and Quadranglers. Furthermore, identify processes that need to be immediately addressed and overhauled in order to avert the induction of Senior Fellows and Quadranglers who publicly display racism, sexism and transphobia, and thereby pose a threat to the safety and well-being of members of the Massey community.
 - a. Some sample questions that could form the basis of this process:
 - i. What details on the nominees are provided to the Principal when they receive the list that is pre-approved by nomination committees?
 - ii. Are these details sufficient for the Principal to make informed decisions before putting those nominees forward to the Governing Board?
 - iii. Further, how can the Governing Board improve the election process of Senior Fellows and Quadranglers? Dr. Alissa Trotz's letter makes clear that the process was not as transparent as it should be, resulting in electing people with very little information about them.
5. Publish a list of steps by August 31, 2020 that will be immediately enacted to ensure all future Senior Fellows and Quadranglers that are inducted into the College uphold Massey's values (as per the Code of Conduct) of equity and diversity.
6. Develop clear and publicly known processes to ensure there are proper reporting and enforcement mechanisms that are upheld when incidents are brought forward.
7. Prepare a plan to make the Governing Board more representative of the diversity in the Junior Fellowship. This plan should be both devised in consultation with the JFs and subsequently approved by the JFs. Following the plan's implementation, the Governing Board shall provide yearly updates to its own constitution in the form of a report and a public town hall.
8. Consider imposing term limits for Senior Fellows and Quadranglers, similar to how Junior Fellows have a term limit of five years.
9. Building off the anti-Black racism training, Indigenous heritage week, and Equity 101 events noted in the college's 2020 Anti-Black Racism Work Plan, create and provide recurring *mandatory* anti-oppression and equity training for all members of the college (staff, Junior Fellows, Senior Fellows, Quadranglers, Journalism Fellows, Visiting Scholars, Mentors and any others holding a position in the College) with advisement from anti-Black racism or anti-discrimination consultants.
10. Organize regular intellectual events such as panels, discussions of books, screening of movies, etc. that shed light on the issues of racism, colonial history, transphobia, and privilege throughout the academic year to ensure continued dialogue. It must be ensured that these events include the full participation and voices of Junior Fellows, as currently, they represent the most diverse group of the College.

Signed by 74 Junior Fellows (*Names omitted for privacy*)

Appendix - Instances of discrimination in Margaret Wenté's work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4Lkfy-Uo08>

Here, Ms. Wenté presents an opinion piece which leverages a common psychological test, the implicit association test, to normalize levels of racism in our society. The implicit association test is a widely-used, yet contentious, test to determine whether our memories are associated with stereotypes [1-3]. Ms. Wenté uses careful language, references to Harvard University research and personal experience to mask the racism presented in this piece. Ms. Wenté describes racism as being the modern excuse to social inequality. She further minimizes modern day racism by accentuating “progress” between the post-Civil Rights Movement era and today (as an example, let us not forget the Emmett Till act was only passed in February of this year in the U.S.A. [4]). These microaggressions are carefully veiled by careful words, yet the sentiment remains: Ms. Wenté expresses that racism should not be a concern as our racism today is no worse than yesterday, and will be no worse tomorrow.

[1] <https://www.vox.com/identities/2017/3/7/14637626/implicit-association-test-racism>

[2] <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/07-08/psychometric>

[3] <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/12/policing-sidebar>

[4] <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr35/text>

Elsewhere, Wenté has suggested that race is not a social construct, but rather a biological reality giving rise to varying human evolution across different continents. Not only is this suggestion dangerous, it is also incorrect. Two UofT Professors explain why here:

https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/62/race_and_the_wilful_ignorance_of_margaret_wente.

Other articles include:

“Wenté, Kay are dangerously reckless to deny rape culture”, The Tyee:

<https://thetyee.ca/Mediacheck/2014/03/06/Wente-Kay-Deny-Rape-Culture/>

“The bullies of Black Lives Matter” This article calling BLM “bullies” for interrupting Pride in 2016 and calling for Pride to address anti-Black racism:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-bullies-of-black-lives-matter/article30746157/>

Letters to the editor in response: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/letters/july-6-an-1867-view-on-interprovincial-trade-plus-other-letters-to-the-editor/article30761661/>

Race and the willful ignorance of Margaret Wenté, Broadbent Institute, Professor Walcott & Professor Mahtani:

https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/62/race_and_the_wilful_ignorance_of_margaret_wente

Cis-sexism/transphobia:

“Why the surge in gender dysphoria among teenage girls?”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-why-the-surge-in-gender-dysphoria-among-teenage-girls/>

“Transgender kids, who decides?”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/transgender-kids-who-decides/article33638814/>

Sexism/Islamophobia against the Niqab:

“Banning the niqab is bigoted and sexist or is it?”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/banning-the-niqab-is-bigoted-and-sexist-or-is-it/article36696047/>