

Human Rights Office

2006-2009

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"...Unless these rights have meaning [here], they have little meaning anywhere." Eleanor Roosevelt address to the UN.

Welcome

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Human Rights Office (HRO) "Year in Review". It is my pleasure to report on the activities of the HRO and to highlight some of the work we have been involved with since 2006.

I encourage you to read this report and to contact the HRO if you have any questions about the information enclosed. The HRO website is at www.queensu.ca/humanrights and you may also contact us by email at hrights@queensu.ca.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Education and Training

- ❖ External Highlights
- ❖ Internal Highlights

Special Projects

- ❖ Human Rights Legislation Group
- ❖ Engaging Africa
- ❖ Queen's Inclusive
- ❖ Online Sexual Module

Community Collaboration

- ❖ McGill University
- ❖ Concordia
- ❖ KFACC
- ❖ Positive Space
- ❖ Transgender Policy Group

Public Programming

- ❖ Colour of Poverty
- ❖ Race is not a 4 letter word
- ❖ Monia Mazigh
- ❖ Noëlle Richardson

Human Rights Initiative Award

Complaints and Consultations

Coming in 2010

- ❖ Multicultural Calendar
- ❖ Investigations Module

Human Rights Office Staff

Education and Training

A significant part of the HRO's mandate involves providing education and training on human rights related issues for members of the Queen's community. Our sessions are tailored to ensure that faculty, staff and students in their various capacities (faculty, managers/supervisors, frontline service providers, student government administrators, teaching assistants, etc.) understand their fundamental human rights obligations. HRO staff also deliver sessions on broader human rights topics including anti-oppression skills and working in partnership with equity-seeking groups ("ally work"). Between 2004 and 2009, the HRO delivered an average of 57 sessions per year. Demand for our expertise on human rights, equity and diversity issues, within Queen's and in the broader Kingston community continues to grow.

Internal Training – Highlights

In 2006, the HRO partnered with Human Resources to deliver training on Rights and Inclusion in the Workplace to all members of CUPE Local 229 and their management teams. HRO facilitators introduced more than 200 staff to various legislation affecting the workplace, and scenarios which illustrated the applicability of human rights to everyday situations. This successful pilot module is now being offered to other employee groups, beginning with those groups whose anti-harassment/discrimination obligations are defined within a collective agreement. The HRO began working with Human Resources and Queen's Libraries administration in 2009 to deliver similar modules to all library staff.

External Training – Highlights

From September 2008 to May 2009, the HRO was pleased to contract with Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) to offer a training series entitled "Working in Community with Newcomers to Canada". Approximately 100 staff from KCHC's satellite agencies (Better Beginnings for Kingston Children, North Kingston Community Health Centre and Streethealth) participated in various sessions including "Anti-Racism and Human Rights" and "Multicultural Competency on the Frontlines".

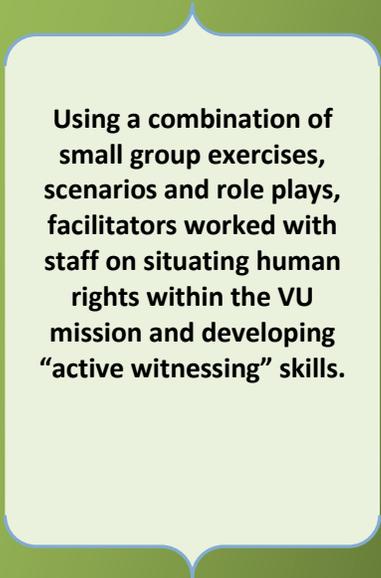
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External Training – Highlights (Continued)

The HRO partnered with Dr. Arunima Khanna from Health Counselling and Disability Services (HCDS) and Susan Anderson from Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) to develop and deliver the sessions to the KCHC staff.

The HRO continued to strengthen relationships with the Human Resources staff of Kingston General Hospital by offering training to the hospital's volunteer Harassment Advisors in April 2009. As in previous years, the HRO introduced the Harassment Advisors to the human rights legislative framework and coached them on best practices for resolving human rights-based complaints within the organization.

In May 2009, the HRO was also pleased to contract with Vegetables Unplugged (VU), the local community shares agriculture business, to design and deliver their staff anti-oppression and human rights training. Using a combination of small group exercises, scenarios and role plays, facilitators worked with staff on situating human rights within the VU mission and developing "active witnessing" skills.



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Recent changes to human rights related legislation include:

- A new human rights process that allows allegations of human rights violations to go directly to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal
- A clause in the new Ontario Human Rights Code that allows civil court to consider allegations of human rights violations within a wrongful dismissal lawsuit
- New customer service regulations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Impending changes to Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act regarding workplace harassment and violence

Special Projects

Human Rights Legislation Group

In 2008, the HRO launched the *Human Rights Legislation Group* composed of unit heads or their designates, from all academic and non-academic groups on campus.

Co-chaired by Irène Bujara, the Human Rights Director and Diane Kelly, Queen's Legal Counsel and Access and Privacy Co-ordinator, the Group provides units with the information they need to understand recent changes in human rights-related legislation, amendments that give employers and service providers additional responsibilities to prevent breaches of human rights.

There were three well-attended and successful meetings of the Human Rights Legislation Group in 2008/2009, addressing issues of workplace harassment, the employer's duty to stop harassment, and accommodation in the workplace. Themes to be addressed in 2010 will include faith-based accommodations and "non-code harassment".

Queen's Inclusive Climate Working Group

Among the challenges facing many Canadian institutions today are those of addressing systemic inequities and creating services/environments in which people feel welcome and valued. Following several reports which referenced a persistent climate of exclusion at Queen's and in the Kingston community, the HRO invited various Queen's community stakeholders to form the *Queen's Inclusive Climate Working Group* in 2009. Comprised of staff, students and faculty, the group aims to meet at least once a term for the purpose of sharing information, fostering collaboration, and coordinating efforts among groups working for change.

Engaging Africa

Since 2007, the Human Rights Office has supported efforts to diversify curricular and co-curricular opportunities at Queen's through the creation of an *Engaging Africa ad hoc Steering Committee*. The Committee has reviewed the potential of raising the profile of African studies and related events on campus by considering current levels of engagement with Africa at Queen's and in Kingston and providing the administration with suggestions for increasing/strengthening opportunity for intellectual and cultural exchange.

In 2008, a successful application to the Principal's Fund for Conferences and International Engagement allowed the Committee to bring two prominent African scholars to campus, Dr. Paul Zeleza and Unomah Azuah. A strong recommendation to come out of these engagements was that Queen's combine its current African and African Diaspora offerings under the rubric of "Africana Studies." The Committee proposes to continue exploring the viability of Africana Studies and opportunities for collaboration at a University-wide research conference in 2009.

Online Sexual Harassment Module

Sexual harassment is a complex and emotionally charged issue. The HRO's *Online Training: Sexual Harassment* was designed to provide members of the community with the basic knowledge and skills required to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment that occur within academic environments.

The Online Training program has been hugely successful. Since its launch in 2007, the HRO has received many requests from individuals, both internal and external to Queen's, wishing to participate and receive a completion certificate. Most recently the Office has been contacted by representatives of the Sierra Club, two U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commissions (EEOC) and the University of Texas wishing to purchase copies of the module for use within their institutions. The Office is currently working with Queen's Marketing and Communications and IT Services on professionally packaging the module for sale to the public. The HRO is also exploring the feasibility of creating additional modules which address other human rights topics including racism and heterosexism/ homophobia.

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Community Collaboration

McGill

The Director of the Human Rights Office was pleased to participate in the bi-annual conference of the Professional Association of Québec University Disability Service Providers (AQICEBS). Irène took part in a panel of experts in Human Rights to discuss legal issues related to post secondary students with disabilities. More specifically, Québec universities are interested in how the AODA is playing out in Ontario universities. We are pleased to have forged solid links with our francophone counterparts in both the Québec Human Rights Commission and Québec universities to exchange ideas and resources.

Concordia

The Human Rights Office also lent its expertise to Concordia University for a review of its Human Rights services as it seeks to enhance its capacity to respond to the full range of evolving human rights issues faced by Québec Universities.

KFACC

The Human Rights Office is honoured to be a member of the *Kingston Frontenac Anti-Violence Coordinating Committee* (KFACC).

KFACC is a broad-based local committee of agencies which provide services for victims of partner abuse and/or sexual violence, their children, their family members, as well as agencies that work with perpetrators. After many years of hard work, the Committee released its 2008 Partner Abuse Protocol for the City of Kingston and Frontenac County which outlines best practices for collaborative responses to domestic violence.

The Committee continues to offer educational resources to the community. In 2009 it launched the *Direct This* Video Contest, an invitation to local high school students to develop short films on the theme of ending violence against women. The HRO staff members have been active participants in the development of this initiative.

Queen's Positive Space Program

Supported by the AMS Education on Queer Issues Project (EQUIP), the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG), the HRO and a voluntary undergraduate student fee, the Positive Space Program continues its invaluable mission to offer support and resources regarding Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) issues, and to strengthen local LGBTQ and ally communities. The Program, which has been both hugely successful and inspirational for many community members, currently boasts a strong membership of staff, faculty and students and there is a steady demand for Positive Space information sessions.

In 2009, the Queen's Positive Space Program celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a new initiative, the launch of the OPIRG Positive Space Award. The Award recognizes a full-time Queens University undergraduate or graduate student who has demonstrated leadership in the Queen's and/or Kingston community in promoting the recognition and celebration of sexual and gender diversity.

Transgender/Transsexual Policy Group

In Canada, the rights of trans people are protected by human rights legislation. The Harassment/Discrimination Policy of Queen's University lists gender identification as a ground of prohibited discrimination.

The *Transgender/Transsexual Policy Group* is made up of students, academic and general staff interested in the issues faced by trans people at Queen's. This Group has been working to increase trans accessibility in residences, employment and campus services by removing barriers from policies and practices.

In 2009, the Policy Group teamed up with members of the Queen's Accessibility Committee to advise the University on how best to ensure that facilities such as washrooms and change rooms are designed with the needs of various groups (e.g. people with disabilities, people transitioning, young families, etc.) in mind. The two committees are providing the University with valuable insight into how to broaden the accessibility features of the new Queen's Centre.

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Public Programming

Colour of Poverty

In January 2008, The HRO, in cooperation with the Department of Geography and organizer/Ph.D. candidate Cheryl Sutherland, was pleased to welcome representatives of Toronto's Colour of Poverty Campaign to campus to speak on the issue of the racialization of poverty in Ontario. The workshop, facilitated by campaign organizer Michael Kerr, invited participants to view the film, *The Colour of Poverty* and discuss key issues/strategies that need to be pursued to best address the growing economic and social oppression affecting racialized groups in our communities.

Race is a Four Letter Word

The Human Rights Office, with the Kingston Race Relations Association, marked International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2009 by screening the Canadian documentary, *Race is a Four Letter Word*. The film, directed by Sobaz Benjamin, exposes Canadian contradictions and conflicts around notions of "race". We gratefully acknowledge the participation of Dr. Arumima Khanna of HCDS who facilitated a very engaging discussion on race and identity following the film.

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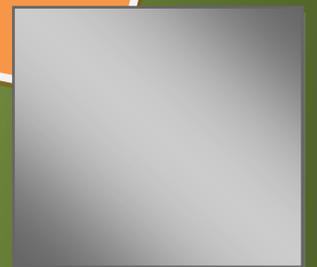
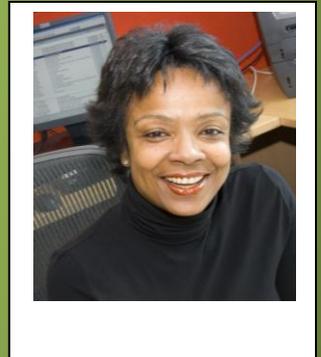
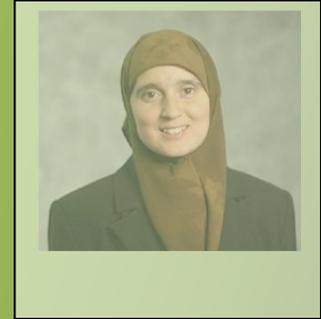
Monia Mazigh

On March 24, 2009 the HRO, with the Queen's Muslim Students Association, the Office of the Associate VP and Dean of Student Affairs, and other partners, was honoured to welcome Dr. Monia Mazigh to Queen's to speak about her recent book, *Hope and Despair: My Struggle to Free My Husband Maher Arar*.

In addition to her formal talk, Dr. Mazigh made herself available earlier in the day to meet with students to discuss *Spirit, Space and Survival: Experiences of Muslims on Canadian University Campuses*. The events received extensive media coverage and were well-attended by members of both the Queen's and Kingston communities.

Noëlle Richardson

In November 2008, the HRO, the Equity Office, and the School of Policy Studies were pleased to welcome the Ontario Public Service's (OPS) new Chief Diversity Officer, Ms. Noëlle Richardson to campus to discuss *Innovation, Leadership and Diversity: New Visions for Equity in the Ontario Public Service*. In one of her first public addresses in her new portfolio, Ms. Richardson addressed the recent creation of the OPS Diversity Office, as well as evolving strategies for achieving equity in the public service. Members of the OPS Diversity Office have expressed an interest in further collaboration with members of the University community (including representatives from Career Services, the Equity Office, the HRO and the Office of the VP Academic) regarding evaluation tools for institutional systemic change.



Human Rights Initiative Award

Queen's is indebted to many people who have over the years contributed to making the university a more equitable and welcoming place. The Queen's University Human Rights Initiative Award is given annually in recognition of initiatives that have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of human rights at Queen's University. The Selection Committee responsible for choosing recipients consists of members of the HRO Advisory Council. The Award, presented by the Principal, is normally granted on December 10, the Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Nominations for the Queen's Human Rights Initiative Award are considered on the basis of the originality of initiatives, their positive impact on the University community, their sustainability and how they have encouraged partnership/cooperation among Queen's constituents.

In 2008, the recipients of the Human Rights Initiative Award were members of the Queen's Muslim Students Association for their work on a *Campaign for a Hate-Free Campus*, including a website and an Islamophobia reporting mechanism for students. The 2009 recipient was the Queen's University International Centre's *English Conversation Group* for its years of providing a welcoming venue for cross-cultural dialogue and friendship.

Past recipients of the Award include the Residence Life *Peer Education Program on Intimacy and Dating*, the HIV AIDS Regional Services *Education Program*, the AMS's *Accessibility Queen's*, and the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre's Annual *Aboriginal Symposium*.

The Human Rights Initiative Award was designed by Governor-General Award winning artist and author, Leo Yerxa (*Last Leaf, First Snowflake; Ancient Thunder*)

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Complaints and Consultations

Executive Summary Findings:

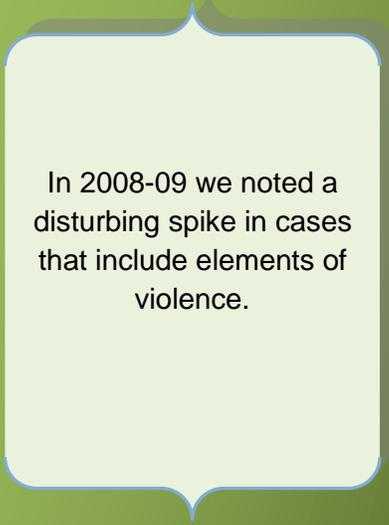
As in previous years, the majority of cases constitute breaches of human rights on the grounds of sex (most are sexual harassment), and race-related grounds; disability is the next most frequently cited ground; this follows the trend noted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Recommendation: added attention to innovative programs in those areas.*

Most faith-based accommodations requested relate to Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths in equal proportions. *Recommendation: making best use of the multifaith online calendar by making it part of a more comprehensive initiative.*

In most years we note that cases involving violence make up slightly over 10% of cases; however, in 2008-09 we noted a disturbing spike in cases with elements of violence; the majority involved cases of sexual harassment, but cases based on race-related grounds also contributed to this. *Recommendation: continued emphasis on the intersection of violence and human rights.*

In over 60% of the cases, the complainants are women and come from the undergraduate and graduate student groups; The majority of respondents (40 – 45%) are men, although units must respond to complaints in a substantial number of the cases (20 – 30%); units and undergraduate students make up the majority of respondents, with academic and non-academic staff making up the next largest group. *Recommendation: additional attention to systemic approaches.*

Respondent advisors were used infrequently, but formed an integral part of the informal resolution team in all cases. *Recommendation: attention to Keith Norton's recommendation to modify this part of the process.*



In 2008-09 we noted a disturbing spike in cases that include elements of violence.

Coming in 2010

Multicultural Calendar

Each year, the HRO and the Chaplain's Office work together with local faith group representatives to provide the University community with the most up-to-date information about faith observances. In addition to promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue, this program allows University service providers to ensure that they meet their legal obligations to accommodate faith needs and make living, working and study environments accessible for persons of various faiths.

In cooperation with the Multifaith Action Society of British Columbia (MASBC), the HRO has ensured that accurate information about faith dates and accommodation needs appears in the University's events calendar. The Office has also reached an agreement with the Society that has allowed Queen's to be among the first institutions in Canada to pilot the Society's online calendar in 2010.

Investigations Module

With the institution of Ontario's direct-to-tribunal human rights process and the now limited function of the Ontario Human Rights Commission comes increased pressure on managers/supervisors to ensure they appropriately investigate claims of human rights violations within their jurisdiction. In order to better assist Queen's administrators to fulfill their obligations, the HRO is in the process of developing an electronic Investigations Module. When completed, this educational guide will walk managers and supervisors through the various issues they must consider when human rights issues arise within their areas of responsibility. Topics include how to recognize a "human rights issue", assessing whether an investigation is needed, determining who should investigate and what questions to ask. The Module will be a companion to many of the issues discussed in the new Human Rights Legislation Group (see Special Projects: HR Legislation Group above.)

The HRO has also reached an agreement with the Multifaith Action Society of British Columbia that will allow Queen's to be among the first institutions in Canada to pilot the MASBC's online calendar in 2010.

Human Rights Office Staff

Irène Bujara – Director

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The Queen's HRO was established in 1992 under Irène's direction. In her dual role as the Director of the Human Rights Office and the University Advisor on Equity, Irène advises the University on its obligations under the Human Rights Code as well as other related legislation such as the Employment Equity Act. Irène holds a law degree from the University of Ottawa.

Stephanie Simpson – Associate Director, Advisor (Anti-Racism and Education)

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Stephanie has worked with the Human Rights Office in the portfolio of anti-racism advisor since 1996. She is currently completing her master's of education with a focus on how racism and processes of racialization affect youth in smaller urban centres.

Margot Coulter – Advisor (Sexual Harassment)

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Margot has been at the HRO since September 1992 in the capacity of Sexual Harassment Prevention Coordinator. She is also involved in the Greater Kingston Community as a member of the steering committee of Kingston Frontenac Anti-Violence Coordinating Community (KFACC) and as the Chair of the Board of Kingston Internal House, a shelter for abused women and children who are leaving abusive relationships.

Jean Pfleiderer – Advisor (Gender and Sexual Orientation)

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Jean has worked with the HRO in the capacity of Gender and Sexual Orientation Advisor since 2009.



Ruth Santamaria – Administrative Assistant

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Ruth has been with the HRO since 1998. Ruth has a Diploma in Legal Office Administration from St. Lawrence College as well as a Diploma as Executive Secretary from the Andes Academy of Commerce of Venezuela.

Catherine Wells – Special Projects Officer

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Catherine is the Special Projects Officer for both the HRO and the Equity Office, as well as a faculty member in the Department of French Studies. In addition to her Equity projects, Catherine researches the latest developments in human rights, organizes the University's Human Rights Legislation Group and develops electronic learning tools including human rights e-bulletins and online modules.

Momoko Takanobu

Momoko completed a practicum in the Human Rights Office while studying at Queen's School of English in the Professional Program. Momoko has a law degree from Japan. One of her major project was the development and delivery of a training session on the intersection of Human Rights and Privacy legislation.

Ayan Ga'Al -- Student Volunteer

Ayan is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Studies and Philosophy. She has had a longstanding interest in human rights and has contributed to numerous initiatives aimed at raising awareness of tenant rights and police-community relations. At the Human Rights Office, Ayan has researched various subjects including transit discrimination, resources for immigrant women experiencing domestic violence, and policies on gender-inclusive facilities.