To many students, engaging in the practice of ideas and theories learned in an undergraduate setting is daunting. Often times, courses at the undergraduate level are structured to give students a well-rounded understanding of theories, approaches, and critiques, of an array of sociological concepts, spanning numerous subject areas. While students may be challenged to think about how certain phenomena play out in their own lives, the challenge ends there. What lacks is a call to action, a direct invitation to transform their behaviour and the beliefs of those around them. Dr. Lisa Carver’s fourth year undergraduate seminar course, Sociology of Aging, seeks to change that.

The main project in Professor Carver’s course is a social justice initiative. Students are asked to research a specific social justice issue relating to aging that matters to them personally, and create a hypothetical program, organization, or business that aids in solving said issue. While many of her pupils commented that this process was challenging, citing that they’d never done anything like it before, the results of the class were incredibly creative. With ideas such as a local art collaborative, natural disaster evacuation program, and LGBT+ wellness centres, the students learned not only to think critically about social problems in everyday life, but to consider what steps it would take to alleviate those respective problems. While the projects were hypothetical, the lessons they walked away with have left lasting impressions on the students. Those who took part in the initiatives had the opportunity to delve into the realm of social justice, advocacy, and got to see what goes into the creation of more equitable social environments. The seminar has been instrumental in the ways it alters students approach their studies and brings real life implications of theory to the forefront. If we want meaningful social change, we have to start teaching students that what they learn in the classroom is as real as what they can do outside of it, especially in a sociological context. When students are given the prompts and support to explore practical learning, they are given the chance to break into new spheres of activism. Many of Professor Carver’s students exemplify this sentiment. Anyone interested in learning more about the SOCY424 projects are more than welcome to visit Mac-Corry D4 where they are on display in the hallway or you can contact Professor Lisa Carver at her office in Mac-Corry D521 or at her instructor e-mail LC105@queensu.ca.
The Social Issues Commission (SIC) seeks to facilitate dialogue, education, and engagement on all matters related to equity, identity, and anti-oppression. The SIC strives to foster a safer space for students, to connect students with resources, and to engage with and promote social justice and human rights issues on campus.

**ML:** Can you tell me a bit more detail about what your role as Commissioner of Social Issues entails?

**RS:** I oversee two services, the Peer Support Centre, which is a peer-to-peer confidential support service and the AMS Food Bank, [which] is open to all Queen’s students 12hrs a day. I also oversee three deputy portfolios: the Deputy of Indigenous Affairs; Editor in Chief of Collective Reflections, which is a creative publication on equity; and the Deputy of Education. I plan campus-wide campaigns and larger initiatives that connect the AMS to major issues. Given the events of last year’s “Countries” party we’ve partnered with the Human Rights Office and Stephanie Simpson who’s helped us come up with a series of posters, information to put on our website that helps students identify what cultural appropriation is and isn’t, and our button campaign (“Appreciation not Appropriation”).

**ML:** What are some of the main equity-related concerns on campus?

**RS:** Sexual violence awareness and response are issues that the university and the Kingston community are thinking about which is great, but there’s a lot of thought that still needs to go into how people react to things like moving day signs [such as a “Daughter Drop Off” sign hung in student housing], that we don’t really connect to sexual violence, but those are conversations that are definitely happening. I think since stepping into my role four years ago anti-racism and racialized students has also become a huge conversation. There’s the Principal’s implementations committee which hopefully influences a shift in conversation that makes it action-focused and not about stopping the conversation and just publishing a report. Anti-racism for me was a big focus for me going into my term. The Committee Against Racial and Ethnic Discrimination is also planning more events and conversations around these topics.

**ML:** What would you ask of students who want to help and what would you ask of staff and people in administrative roles? Are they different requests?

**RS:** To students I would say listen to each other. When you’re really passionate about something it can be hard to realize when you need to step away and let someone else speak. Be aware of who is occupying the conversation. My advice would be to allow marginalized students the space to talk about their own experiences. To administration and faculty, I would have the same advice but also don’t be afraid to listen to advice that may be countered to what the institution may have been enforcing. For example, allowing students to help shape the curriculum, especially in the context of race and racism, there needs to be a change to reflect the students who are affected by this information. That means when there is sensitive content in the classroom being discussed, people need to be aware of the backgrounds of students and how they may feel about the material that they’re being asked to look at or study. Sometimes faculty may shy away from that because it challenges what they have understood the classroom and curriculum organization to be about but I would encourage them to listen and invite students into the conversation.
Where are you from? Why do you use a wheelchair? From one perspective, these inquiries are innocent questions of curiosity, but from another perspective, these questions are discriminatory and exclusionary. Our curiosity gives us a sense of entitlement to the answers, but we become blind to the important questions that we are not asking. If all we hear is a foreign accent… If all we see is a person's skin colour or ethnicity… If all we remember is the person's wheelchair then what do we really know about this person? Giving one aspect of a person's identity a 'master status' limits this person's opportunities and abilities. At any given moment, “Vivien” (a composite character) can be multiple identities: student, parent, francophone, vegetarian, lesbian, person of colour, Indigenous, Deaf and a wheelchair user, but many people only remember the wheelchair. This is not wrong, but it is short-sighted and inadvertently discriminatory.

To state that Vivien is ‘disabled’ is to say that she is broken. To say that Vivien is a ‘person living with a disability’ gives the disability a master status that erases all of her other identities. The intersectionality of Vivien’s identity gives her access to multiple social groups for support, but this intersectionality also makes her the recipient of multiple forms of discrimination. If we only remember the wheelchair then we limit Vivien’s opportunities. We need to look beyond the surface of what we do see because we are missing something important.

Dr. Audrey Kobayashi (Queen’s Dept. of Geography) understands the intersectionality of identity and disability well. Dr. Kobayashi is a researcher and writer on topics related to racism, colonialism, identity, and disability. She explains that racism, homophobia and ableism can be distinct forms of discrimination. Racial and homophobic slurs tend to be overt, but ableism or disability related slurs tend to be more covert and patronizing forms of discrimination. Making comments about a wheelchair user’s driving skills may seem like an innocent joke, but this remark is discriminatory. It creates a perception that the wheelchair user is dangerous and incapable. If we add to this negative disability perception dark skin and an Indigenous identity, the perception of this person can become even more negative and distorted from reality due to myths and stereotypes. Experiencing multiple forms of discrimination can add to the stress that students living with disabilities face on campus daily.

In my past two years at Queen's I've had a fantastic time getting accustomed to university life. I found it’s multitude of possibilities enticing, and I enjoy being a part of such a rich culture and history. My first year was full of making new friends and trying new experiences, ArtSci Orientation did a good job making me feel welcome at Queen's. They addressed issues of living on your own for the first time, homesickness, and they promoted Queen's health services. As someone who has a permanent disability and struggles with mental health, I found this information to be incredibly helpful. I recommend Queen's wellness services. However, try not to be discouraged with Queen's health services' lack of follow up with missed appointments. This could be concerning for those experiencing mental health issues. While a lack of follow up can be an issue, eventually it will work out. I cannot stress enough how important it is to seek help for mental health struggles and the services offered at Queen's may be helpful.

If you would like more information about Student Wellness Services please visit their office at the LaSalle Building, 146 Stuart Street, or online at www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/health-services/services-offered/mental-health-care
Citizenship Canada to demand that migrant farm workers are given access to Permanent Immigration Status. Without access to Permanent Immigration Status migrant workers can only come to Canada after they have secured employment with one farm and they cannot leave that farm or they will be sent back to their home country. Employers often provide housing for migrant workers in the form of overcrowded, dirty bunkhouses that are exempt from the Landlord and Tenant Act. Migrant farm workers are not treated like Canadian workers: there is no minimum wage, no minimum or maximum numbers of hours one can work in a day, no holiday pay, and no overtime pay. In addition, if a worker becomes ill or is injured they will be sent back to their home country. Migrant farmworkers have no access to unemployment insurance, healthcare, education or other benefits from Canada’s social safety net even though they pay into it. Without Permanent Immigration Status migrant agricultural workers cannot seek a higher standard of treatment and if they do they are sent home and may be banned from the Agricultural Worker Program.

Building solidarity through education and public support is an initiative by Jenna Chasse – Undergraduate student, Global Development/Gender Studies. Are you someone with an overflowing portfolio of drawings, paintings, poetry, or photographs that are just waiting to be seen? Are you also someone that cares about creative expressions of social activism? If so, this art initiative is waiting for you! In an effort to work toward social justice activism and engage student artists at Queen’s, I, in collaboration with the Sociology department’s Equity Committee, will be curating an exhibition of student artwork to be displayed on Queen’s Campus! This exhibition will showcase creative, anti-oppressive expressions on topics such as: feminism, sexuality and gender diversity, race and ethnicity, ableism and accessibility, and mental health and identity. We are hoping for a variety of mediums like visual art, photography, and short writing pieces to be included in the collection and mounted near the end of this semester. Following the installation, we are also hoping to host an Open House in which artists are able to discuss their pieces and engage with other artists. Keep your eyes peeled for details about this event!

Contributing to the ongoing success of this project is Dr. Sarita Srivastava through her Social Justice Practicum GNDS 440 course. The fourth year Practicum is a seminar-based course in which students work in and outside of the classroom in community organizing projects. The content encourages students to engage with feminist, anti-racist, and queer theory through community projects to understand how these theories can be integrated with real world practices. Because much of my undergraduate work focuses on intersectional feminist art and literature, identity politics, and the complex ways in which these frameworks manifest in contemporary art and media production, a project that works to engage student artists is a very important initiative to me. Artists that are willing to make their personal experiences with these complex topics available to the public encourage us to think about social justice activism in multi-dimensional ways! Thank you to the artists, Sarita, and the Equity Committee for their continued support of this project. Stay tuned for more information regarding the dates and times of the final exhibition!