



DATE: February 14, 2018
TO: Faculty of Social Work Student Body
FROM: The Faculty of Social Work
RE: **Addressing the responses to the Stanley verdict at the Faculty of Social Work**

Dear Students:

The Faculty of Social Work remains committed to its mission of working with marginalized and oppressed peoples. We continue to be guided by our Mission Statement and will continue to stress the importance of supporting students to develop “the commitment, knowledge, values, attitudes and skills required to confront structural inequalities”. The recent Stanley verdict has served to polarize communities at the local, regional, and national levels. At the Faculty of Social Work, we are all experiencing this polarization in our personal and educational contexts. We first want to extend our compassion and heart felt sympathies to all who are suffering due to a sense of injustice or due to the reactions of friends and family. Situations like these, that polarize opinions, can often lead to collateral damage as people’s anger and frustration on both sides is displayed. We encourage you to seek support from trusted friends, peers, Faculty members, and University student services.

Unfortunately, contentious issues such as this can create an unsafe social context with high tensions. In these contexts, the risks for inappropriate and unethical conduct increases. People who are incensed at the outcome, regardless of which “side” they are on, may use the heightened emotions as a justification for saying and doing things that they ordinarily would not. As a result, in the Faculty of Social Work, we will strive to acknowledge the tensions and the associated risks, and we call upon each other to do whatever we need to do to deal with the personal triggers evoked by the verdict. For some, this will mean grieving. For others, it will mean reconciling that people we know and love may not share our values and mores.

In all instances, students, staff, and faculty at the University of Regina Faculty of Social Work should continue to treat each other with kindness, respect, and compassion, as well as in accordance with the Social Work Code of Ethics as well as the University of Regina policies regarding a Respectful University (<https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-GOV-100-015.html>). This means that all forms of harassment and discrimination are prohibited.

Examples of conduct that is subject to University Policy include any incidence of verbal and physical assaults, blatant acts of verbal racism and threats, and racial micro-aggressions. Racial micro-aggressions are defined as:

... brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color.(Sue et al. 2007)

The profession of social work in Canada is founded upon the principles of social justice and service to humanity. We are all bound by the Canadian Association of Social Work Code of Ethics which lists, as our primarily professional responsibility, the well being of the client. We can apply this principle to our lives and remember that the well-being of others must be among our primary concerns. The first four principles and values of the CASWE Code of ethics are:

- Respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons
- Pursuit of social justice
- Service to humanity
- Integrity in professional practice

Regardless of your personal opinion about the verdict, be reminded that others may not share your opinion. As a student of social work, you have committed to education and training in a profession that upholds the Code of Ethics to which you, as students, are automatically subject. At the Faculty of Social Work, we have expectations of our students that are aligned with Code of Ethics and University standards of conduct. These principles form the foundation of our “Suitability for Professional Practice” policy. Our expectations for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students are as follows:

- We can and will engage in respectful and compassionate conversation about difficult issues.
- Unethical conduct, including racial micro-aggressions, will not be tolerated and will be subject to intervention.
- Everyone has the right to a safe and respectful work and study place.
- Everyone has a right to their opinion, as long as that opinion does not harm or infringe upon the human rights of others or violate the principles of social justice and anti-oppression
- The Faculty of Social Work is a safe, compassionate, and respectful place to work and study.

In closing, we extend our compassion to all students and encourage you to seek the supports that you require at this time. We have confidence that we will come together as a strong community and support each other through these challenging times. We invite everyone to unite in our collective vision of social justice.

With respect,

Judy White, PhD RSW

Dean,

On behalf of all faculty of the Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina.