

## Taskforce on Assessing Whiteness for Equity, Understanding, and Change

To:CCCC Executive Committee

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Date of This Report: 19 October 2020

### 1. What are the recommendations/actions that your committee would like the CCCC Executive Committee to consider?

- **Motion:** The Executive Committee of CCCCs will prioritize the appointment of Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour to editorial, editorial staff posts, and CCCCs editorial boards and teams at Studies in Writing and Rhetoric (SWR); College Composition and Communication (CCC); and Forum. The Executive Committee, led by its Chair, will recruit, solicit, and actively support BIPOC editors, in particular, as it negotiates MOAs with home institutions
  - a. by communicating with home institutions regarding the importance and prestige of aforesaid positions
  - b. by advocating for significant course reassignments as well as institutional service relief
  - c. by signaling the organization's valuation of the service offered by editors to the organization and, especially, the discipline, by providing stipends to editors and advocating for matching funds from home institutions. Stipend amounts shall be arranged as annual budgets are determined in consultation between the CCCCs Chair and NCTE with the stipulation that stipend amounts are not to be merely symbolic but rather a meaningful reward for important labour.
- **Motion:** That the CCCCs Chair in consultation with the CCCCs Nominating Committee examine the practice of placing BIPOC candidates in competition with one another for leadership posts with the intention of arriving at a nomination practice that does not limit but rather increases the number of BIPOC members who may be elected to serve in such posts. This examination should result in a recommended motion to address the unintended limit the current practice prescribes.
- **Motion:** That the Executive Committee of CCCCs issue a public statement in support of scholars in the discipline researching and writing about race, racism, and anti-racism – particularly BIPOC scholars, and condemning *ad hominem* attacks mounted against them.
- **Motion:** That the Taskforce on Assessing Whiteness for Equity, Understanding, and Change is charged to continue its work for an additional two years and urged by the Executive Committee to develop both a position statement and accompanying recommendations for organizational change during the coming year of its charge (2021-2022).

**NOTE: It is the assessment of the current taskforce members that none of the above motions require any change to either the CCCCs Constitution or its Bylaws. Nomination processes are prescribed in Article VII of the Constitution and include the process for the appointment of the editor of CCCs. Appointment of editors to CCC and SWR, as well as for additional publications are further prescribed in Article VI of the Organization's Bylaws.**

### 2. Please explain why your committee is making the recommendations/actions. Provide a brief rationale and narrative for each recommendation and/or action stated above and how it relates to and advances the committee/task force's charges.

- a. Like the opportunity to act as program chair for the CCCCs convention, the opportunity to take the helm of one of the organization's publications offers the editor a chance to shape conversation in the field well into the future in significant ways. Editors of CCC, SWR, and Forum influence the discipline through what they choose to publish, their choice of topics for special issues, through their choice of reviewers, and through their priorities with regard to how submitted manuscripts take up or speak back to prior scholarship. We believe that the organization should, in a concerted way, yield to the leadership of BIPOC scholars with regard to these matters and here

we mean yield in the double sense: get out of the way *and* receive/learn from an abundant harvest. The taskforce, notes, that editorial work requires significant labour and that to prioritize the appointment of BIPOC scholars to editorial positions will entail asking those who continue to carry extraordinary service loads in their institutions to take on still more service to their disciplines. Therefore, we believe that the EC should pursue all available means for recognizing and compensating BIPOC scholars who accept editorial appointments for CCCCs publications.

- b. The taskforce is concerned that the current nominating process – designed to assure equitable elections among a slate of diverse candidates – may be having the effect of limiting the number of BIPOC members of the Executive Committee. We ask that the CCCCs Chair and the nominating committee examine this question and, if necessary, revisit the process by which nominations are presented to voting members.
- c. The taskforce notes an increasing number of ad hominem attacks against anti-racist scholars and, in particular, BIPOC scholars engaging in research and writing in this area. We note these attacks unfolding in CCCCs conference presentations as well as across online forums. We note also recent pronouncements within the federal government eliminating anti-racist training for federal employees and threatening enforcement through funding cuts. We urge the EC to take a public stand against such attacks on anti-racist education, in general, and against scholars in our profession researching and writing about anti-racism, in particular.
- d. The taskforce recognizes that it has more work to do. We have begun several projects that are not yet completed. These include a racial history of CCCCs and a position statement. We ask that the Executive Committee empower us to continue our work together.

**3. What has your committee done that the membership in general should know? Please compose a brief post for the CCCC web site that highlights your ongoing work. NCTE staff will see that your text is posted on your committee's behalf.**

The CCCCs Taskforce on Assessing Whiteness for Equity, Understanding, and Change gathered to deliberate on the matter of whiteness and, particularly, of whiteness<sup>1</sup> in the late winter and early spring of 2020 as the nation and the world were outraged by the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. In the months during which we have met and talked together about racial inequities in CCCCs and, by extension, NCTE as well, 108 Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour have been shot down by police across the U.S. (59 Black; 42 Hispanic or Latinx; 5 Asian; 2 Indigenous).<sup>2</sup> We note also that, while Canada keeps no national record of the number of people killed by police nor do self-reporting police departments collect data on police shootings by race or ethnicity, a CBC database tracking such information between 2000 and 2017 found that in Winnipeg, while Indigenous peoples compose roughly 10% of the population, they compose over 60% of those who were killed during encounters with police. The CBC found that Blacks composed 37% of those killed by police although they make up just over 8% of the population. Black Torontonians, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has reported, are 20 times more likely to be shot by police than whites.<sup>3</sup> We could not separate nor did we

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<sup>1</sup> Learned ways of knowing and doing—of thinking, speaking, and writing—characterized by a racialized sense of oneself as best equipped to judge, preach, and to suffer.” This is a term coined by Minnie Bruce Pratt and taken up by Marilyn Frye to describe the ways that ideologies of white supremacy are taken up in thought and speech. She writes that “[w]hitely people generally consider themselves to be benevolent and goodwilled, fair, honest, and ethical...Whitely people have a staggering faith in their own rightness and goodness and that of other whitely people.” (2001, 90-91; see also Condon 2012: 34) Note: whiteness is not particular to white people, but can be learned and practiced by people of color as well.

Internalized Racial Superiority (IRS): The unconscious uptake, by whites, of the logics of white supremacy, such that one lives as if the idea of white supremacy is true.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, Li (10 September, 2020). “It’s been over 3 months since George Floyd was killed by police. Police are still killing Black people at disproportionate rates.” CBS News: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-killing-police-black-people-killed-164/>

<sup>3</sup> Simpson, Natasha (2 June, 2020). Canada has Race-Based Police Violence Too. We Don’t Know How Much. The Tyee: <https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/06/02/Canada-Race-Based-Violence/>

feel we should separate our deliberations from the material conditions of white supremacy and racism so evident around us.

In fact, as we studied the racial history of CCCCs and NCTE, we began to notice that both organizations seem most inclined to issue resolutions and position statements pertaining to race, racism, and racial justice when public outrage peaks following the assassination of another Black person. And so we began to wonder how many Black people – how many BIPOC peoples – must die before CCCCs and NCTE move beyond pronouncements of solidarity or professed commitments to racial equity and “inclusion” to the active dismantling of white domination of our professional organizations.

CCCCs and NCTE remain, despite their myriad expressed commitments to and endorsements of racial justice, largely static spaces with regard to

- a general lack of awareness that whiteness is an ideology that organizes and stratifies behavior and experience rather than an ontological characteristic of raced-white peoples
- a largely shared belief that, generally speaking we, raced-white people, are committed and formidable allies regardless of any evidence to the contrary
- a prevailing conviction that the tenets of liberalism are universal and just although those tenets are the legacy of centuries of white supremacist philosophy, theology, and science. Within this ideological context, whiteness is represented as culturally and symbolically neutral even as it is centred and reified, prefiguring and shaping all of CCCCs and NCTE’s organizational spaces from administration to governing committees to conferences.<sup>4</sup>

The Taskforce believes that neither lack of awareness of whiteness as ideology nor unsupported beliefs about the quality of white alliance and allyship may be addressed in whole or in part absent an address of the ongoing dysconscious mobilization of white and whitely liberalism within both CCCCs and NCTE in service of preserving legacies of domination that accrue to whites within these organizations.

#### **4. Please give a very brief historical overview of this Committee:**

**The taskforce was issued its charge by CCCCs Chair, Vershawn Ashanti Young in December of 2019. We began our work together early in the new year (2020).**

#### **5. Members on the Committee:**

- Frankie Condon
- Mara Lee Grayson
- Cheryl Glenn
- Doug Kern
- Robert Munday

#### **6. Members Active in On-Line Discussion:**

- Frankie Condon
- Mara Lee Grayson
- Cheryl Glenn
- Doug Kern
- Robert Munday

#### **7. Committee Charge(s):**

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, Sara (2007). A Phenomenology of Whiteness. *Feminist Theory* 2007 8: 149

- **Charge 1:** To work with the Chair of CCCC within the first two weeks of Task Force formation to develop a robust charge that encompasses the following objectives outlined by the current chair of CCCC:
  
- **Charge 2:** To be courageous and bold in pursuing the following:
  - Assess the operation of white privilege, whiteness, and whiteness within CCCC and NCTE
  - Survey and expose tacit and intentional racism within CCCC and NCTE
  - Detail how within CCCC and NCTE whiteness and racism or antiracism activities have historically effected leadership roles and members within the organization
  - Identify any “unwritten rules” that have a disparate impact on minorities, and that may intentionally or unwittingly buttress white privilege
  - Consult with members of colour in CCCCs, listening to their concerns and feedback
  - Consult with other members of all backgrounds listening to their concerns and feedback

**Charge 3:** Action:

- Imagine and offer tangible options for what might be done to advocate for recognition and intervention in the problem of white privilege, whiteness, and whiteness as they function within CCCC and NCTE.
- Make recommendations for action to the Executive Committee by November 2020.