

Federation President's update regarding racial profiling and anti-Black racism at Congress 2019

June 10, 2019

Thank you to the many members who have contacted the Federation to express their concern and outrage about the incident that took place at Congress on June 2, 2019. Instances of anti-Black racism, racial profiling and racial discrimination are deeply troubling no matter when or where they may take place. I want to assure you that the Federation is taking action to address this issue and is committed to keeping our community informed as we move forward.

Enforcing our Code of Conduct

The Congress Code of Conduct sets out clear standards of behaviour for anyone taking part in Congress. The Code, which all participants must agree to follow, states that “all attendees are entitled to enjoy an environment free of all forms of discrimination [and] harassment.”

Anyone committing such acts must be held responsible. To that end, the Federation has undertaken an investigation to collect all relevant information about the June 2nd incident. Based on that information, and in light of the Code of Conduct, we will decide what approach to take with the parties involved (e.g. punitive, restorative).

Professionals with human rights and legal backgrounds have informed us of how important it is to follow the principles of procedural fairness when dealing with a situation like this one. The steps we take must be fair, thorough, and unbiased. This is essential for ensuring that any sanctions we impose are grounded in sound principle and facts.

Confronting anti-Black racism, racial profiling and racial discrimination

We will complete our investigation without delay. Meanwhile, we are committed to learning from this incident and to acting on it:

- We have apologized to the racialized scholar who reported the incident and we are keeping him up to date on the steps we are taking.
- We are communicating with the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) and are taking action on their four requests arising from this incident. We are preparing to meet with the BCSA this week so that we can resolve outstanding questions and move forward together.
- We are also planning the next Congress, and future ones, with a commitment to make equity, diversity, and inclusion a focus that cuts across our activities.



- We will be looking for ways to strengthen the Code of Conduct, and the procedures for enforcing it, so that Congress, as a platform for scholars, students, and community members to engage with one another, is a space free of discrimination and harassment of any kind.

We will have more information for you in the coming days and weeks about next steps. We will be looking for your input as we move forward. Congress belongs to all of us – to scholarly associations, host institutions, and everyone who participates – so we all have a part to play in shaping its future.

Work ahead for our community

While our community of members, partners and collaborators is often a progressive one, we have been reminded of how much work still needs to be done by all to stop racial profiling and anti-Black racism.

The Federation condemns the policing of Black bodies, violence against Black individuals and the surveillance of Black members of our communities. We must, together, unequivocally condemn anti-Black racism. By raising our voices against racism, we keep each other accountable and can work collectively to name it when it happens, and take action against it.

Anti-Black racism has no place in the Social Sciences and Humanities community nor any community. We are committed to working harder and collaboratively with our members and partners to create safe spaces – spaces that are free from harassment, racial profiling and discrimination.

Again, thank you to all members who have raised their voice and demanded action. We are listening, we are learning, and we are acting.

Patrizia Albanese, President
Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences
president@ideas-idees.ca

