

Some students and faculty outraged after UWindsor prof uses N-word during class

Professor apologizes for "bringing this pain" to her students

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/university-windsor-professor-anti-black-racism-1.5782461>



University of Windsor law student Josh Lamers says he is disappointed in the professor and the school. (Jennifer La Grassa/CBC)

Some University of Windsor students and faculty are calling on the school to do better fighting racist language at the university after a professor used a derogatory term at least twice during a class.

Professor Ashley Glassburn-Falzetti said the N-word while warning students about offensive language they would encounter in a book she was assigning. Student Josh Lamers is not in the professor's course but says others brought the incident to his attention and he posted about it online.

"Instructors often say they're using the N-word as a teaching device, often these instructors are non-Black and they run on academic freedom and freedom of expression to say these anti-Black things," he said.

"As much as this is egregious, she is a signal of what is happening continuously on campus."

In a letter addressed to UWindsor President Robert Gordon, student and faculty members of Researchers, Academics, and Advocates of Color for Equity in Solidarity (RAACES) also expressed "grave concerns" regarding the incident, and refer to continuing "overt anti-Blackness" at the university campus.

Glassburn-Falzetti is an assistant professor of women's and gender studies at the university.

- **Hide your last name, keep quiet in class: UWindsor panel talks anti-Black racism on campuses**

In a Twitter thread Wednesday, Glassburn-Falzetti issued an apology to the class, saying after sleeping on what she said and seeing how it impacted students, she realized that it was wrong.

Glassburn-Falzetti posted this apology in a Twitter thread to Lamers who had been vocal about his disappointment.

She continued to say, "To the students who were directly harmed by this, I apologize for bringing this pain into this course for you. One student raised their concern with me about this. I apologized and immediately changed the content warning for the book posted on blackboard. I promise not to do this again."



In a response to CBC News, the university says the professor used the term in a class setting and that they are looking into the incident. (Chris Ensing/CBC)

CBC News reached out to Glassburn-Falzetti for comment but did not hear back in time for publication.

The use of the word in university teaching settings is controversial, in some contexts is defended by some academics.

CBC News reached out to the UWindsor about the situation and it provided the following statement:

"The word was used in a classroom setting and the University considers this to be a serious issue, and one that is being addressed. We hope a resolution will be reached shortly. The University must provide a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone, and all forms of anti-Black racism must be dealt with."

Shouldn't have happened

But Lamers said he was dissatisfied with both the professor's "non-apology," and the university's statement, noting that this never should have happened to begin with.

"Her apology that she gave wasn't good enough because it very much hinged on her saying 'I apologize, I apologize, I promise I'll never do it again.'" he said.

"There is systemic and institutional ways in which these kind of moments are accepted as fact about Black life on campus, that we just have to accept that these moments happen and that we just have to forgive without asking for substantive remedy and repair."

- **Walk for Justice on Windsor waterfront continues fight against racism near and far**

The word, Lamers said, is attached to a "long history of dehumanizing, vilifying, violating, harming and killing Black people" and for that reason alone, it's "deeply unacceptable for non-Black people to use it."

UWindsor law student Princess Doe was also not satisfied with the professors apology. She said not saying the N-word if you aren't Black is "racism 101," adding that the professor "doesn't have an excuse there."

Doe called it "appalling" and "ashaming" that the professor said the word given that she's highly educated in anti-racism work and following the events of the last few months.

"We're in this current year of Black life, Black liberation. Everyone has been forced to stop and pause and reflect on how we treat Black bodies in various societal institutions including universities and within the classroom," she said. "It makes me question how she was not cognizant of it as well as how we have created an environment to allow this to happen."

In its letter to the university released Friday, RAACES members said:

"This is the latest manifestation of anti-Blackness at the University of Windsor. In this incident, Blackness was used as a tool to educate white students. The action was hurtful and violent to Black students. As Black, Indigenous and faculty of colour we feel

affronted also. These actions continue to create an unsafe environment for Black students and faculty," reads the letters signed by RAACES members.

The letter calls on Gordon to address the latest incident, stating that the letter is the fourth attempt for communication made by the organization.

UOttawa addresses similar situation

A similar situation occurred at the University of Ottawa with part-time professor Verushka Lieutenant-Duval, who was suspended Sept. 23 after a student complained she had said the N-word during a class as an example of a word that a community has reclaimed.

In response to the suspension, 34 professors in multiple departments signed a letter of support for her on Oct. 16 — the day Lieutenant-Duval returned to teaching — saying that the use of the term can offer educational value and that a classroom is a place for debate.



Princess Doe, a 2nd year law student at the University of Windsor, says she's in support of defunding the police and investing in resources that will have every community feeling safe. (Tahmina Aziz/CBC)

Students at the University of Ottawa came out and [condemned the letter](#).

The University said it set up a new section of the course for students who no longer wanted to be taught by that professor.



After a professor was suspended from UOttawa for using the n-word, 34 professors signed a letter of support that said the use of the word can offer educational value. (Raphaël Tremblay/Radio-Canada)

Lamers said he doesn't anticipate meaningful action will come from the university.

"The university has ... 100 per cent failed to protect Black students and Black people on that campus ... They say that this happened in the class setting. This is happening throughout the campus," he said. "There's an air in which we, the individuals who are harmed by it are meant to accept these weird apologies."

He said this moment indicates that maybe the university does need to implement "strict" anti-Black racism policies or ones that identify how it manifests and includes the protection of students.

- **Some students dissatisfied with UWindsor's anti-Black racism initiatives**

A university-wide commitment to hiring Black professors, to creating streams or courses specific to anti-Black racism in each faculty or the creation of an anti-Black racism institute are things the Black community wants to see, Lamers said.

At the beginning of October, the university said it had completed a number of its anti-Black racism goals including establishing an anti-Black racism working group and hiring two support positions: an anti-Black racism strategic planning officer and a special projects coordinator.

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