

RACISM AT THE DOOR

Lord Beaverbrook High School CHANGE Day

March 13, 2008

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1 minute **Opening:** intros, about Sheldon Chumir, about the Foundation

Good afternoon and welcome to this session, Racism at the Door. This session mainly deals with the Global TV undercover investigation and news reports in 2004 and 2006 into allegations of racism at Calgary night clubs.

My name is Heather MacIntosh and I work for the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, a non-profit organisation in Calgary. We are small – only 5 staff – and we run off of the funds from the estate of Sheldon Chumir who was an MLA deeply concerned with ethics, human rights, and leadership in Alberta.

5 minutes **Interactive Introduction to Racism in Calgary:** Heather

This session is particularly about racism, and I would like to get a sense of your exposure to racism. By a show of hands how many of you have heard a racist joke? How many have heard other racist comments? How many of you have witnessed an incident of racism? Have you or someone you know directly experienced racism?

POSSIBLE COMMENT IF NO HANDS GO UP:

Some examples of racism we've heard about locally include a group speaking another language at a bus stop, and someone saying to them "This is Canada, speak English! Why don't you people go back to where you came from." There are human rights cases of people being passed up for promotion or not receiving an interview due to race. We've heard about Aboriginal people being told a hotel doesn't rent rooms to natives, and of course we've heard from many young men of color being denied entry to certain clubs.

That's great, thanks very much for that exercise. Was that about what you expected when I asked the questions? Was anyone surprised by the number of hands? (comments from students...)

Generally we expect to see more hands up for the first few questions about racist jokes and comments, as these relate to attitudes. There tend to be fewer incidents of racism which are about behaviour. I wanted to point this out as you can see the link between prejudice and acts of discrimination. Now we'll move on to the first Global TV news story on "Racism at the Door" from 2004.

1 minute **Intro to Video #1:**

You may have heard about the Global TV news series called "Racism at the Door". Calgary Global TV undertook an undercover investigation in 2004 regarding allegations that Calgary nightclubs and bars were denying entry to young men because of their skin color. Two volunteers – young men of Asian heritage from Vancouver – wore hidden wires and went to several clubs around town, while Global TV recorded with a hidden camera. Jill Croteau, the Global TV reporter who covered these stories, was with me for the 9:15 am presentation but unfortunately she could not stay.

7 minutes **Video:** Show video from Global TV 2004, SEGMENT 1

Now, this is the original video which made it on to YouTube, which had an enormous impact on the numbers of people who saw this story. Did any of you see this on YouTube?

15 minutes **Reactions from students:**

What did you see in the video? What do you think is going on? How do you feel about it?

What about the issue of clothing? Membership? Age restrictions? Are these legitimate reasons for the nightclubs to discriminate?

Actually, Alberta law permits clubs to discriminate on the basis of dress code, age, and membership in some cases. But if a nightclub is considered a 'service customarily available to the public' then it cannot have 'members only' nights.

Can you think of other legitimate reasons for a nightclub to deny someone entry? (For security reasons – have a weapon, recognize as a past troublemaker, wearing gang colors, drunk, disorderly. The bouncer must have a reasonable belief that someone is drunk which they can prove in a court of law, and not just use that as an excuse. There was a case in Ontario of a man with slurred speech due to surgery who was not let into a restaurant because the owner assumed he was drunk and did not believe his explanation of his speech impediment.)

Race is not explicitly mentioned, so why did Global TV allege racism? Is this fair? What are the key indicators that racism was the issue in these men not getting in?

Generally, systemic racism is very difficult to identify and prove. It is extremely rare to find a bouncer saying "You cannot come in because you are brown." It is far more common to see a racialized group being held to a different standard of dress, or age restrictions, or numbers of pieces of identification requested. When a pattern of discrimination occurs against a specific group, and not just against one individual on one occasion, that we call this systemic discrimination. When that pattern occurs because of security concerns, we call it racial profiling.

1 minute **Intro to Video #2:**

Nearly 2 years later, Global TV did a second series of stories on "Racism at the Door". They wanted to get a sense of what had changed since they first aired the original investigation. As well, they had considerable interest from their first story and so there was interest at the studio in continuing to pursue the issue. Another 2 volunteers came forward – this time 2 local young black men – wore wires, and were secretly recorded trying to get into Calgary nightclubs again. In 2006 Global produced a longer series, which includes the undercover investigation at nightclubs, as well as interviews with the

volunteers, club owners, anti-racism activists, and human rights lawyers and advocates. They held a town hall discussion forum, and also contacted Calgary Police Service about their role in providing off-duty security at the clubs. We'll watch just the first segment and then discuss it together.

10 minutes **Video:** Show video from Global TV 2006, SEGMENT 1

10 minutes **Reactions from Students:**
Discussion.

I'd like to relay some of the comments from Jill Croteau, the Global TV reporter you saw, about this second segment. Global TV won an award for investigative journalism for the series on Racism at the Door. The YouTube coverage led to world-wide awareness of the story. Jill herself received both accolades and criticism, even death threats, for this work. She described feeling like some people saw her as a race traitor. Since the stories, she is often asked to speak publicly at events like this, to talk about her work and about fighting racism.

1 minute **SCF student daytimer ads:**

So what did the government do about the series? Well, the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission put together guidelines for the Hospitality Industry. At the Sheldon Chumir Foundation we didn't think these were adequate, and so we put together guidelines for students called "Know Your Rights at Alberta Nightclubs" and I'll hand some examples around for you to look at.

10 minutes **ID Scanning at Tanta Nightclub**

One of the things that these guidelines for nightclubs mentioned was ID scanning. The human rights people argued that scanning IDs at the entrance to nightclubs would allow the clubs to identify which *individuals* were a security risk, based on past information, and that way avoid *racial profiling* entire groups of young men of colour.

What do you think about this idea? Do you see any potential problems with it?

In the last few months there has been a controversy over ID scanning at Tanta Nightclub downtown. The Privacy Commissioner of Alberta looked into this and determined that the scans violated privacy rights of patrons for 2 reasons: 1) they did not agree to have their driver's license scanned, and 2) Tanta was making all scanned information available to the police, without telling patrons.

What are some of the issues here?

- safety
- identity theft
- informed consent
- privacy of personal information
- night clubs as agents of the state
- racial profiling (ability to eliminate it – positive OR to use ID scans as a pretext for profiling – negative)

2 minutes **Wrap up and Questions:**

Before we go, I wanted to give you a quick idea of who is doing what on racism at the clubs and where to get more information. Up front I have some pamphlets on the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, and some articles on ID scanning at Tantra. The Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary is holding a *People's Human Rights Commission* event which is open to the public on April and will look at racism and human rights issues. There is a poster here with details, and feel free to attend. As well, Dr. Hieu Van Ngo of the University of Calgary is currently undertaking a study entitled "Experience of Young Minority Adults in Calgary Night Clubs." He is recruiting participants for the study, so if you know any 20-25 year olds who might be interested, let me know and I can email out some information.

Thank you so much for your participation today, and I'd like to close by stating that we can all take a stand against racism in our midst. Thanks again.