



**Mount Royal Faculty Association
Executive Board Meeting – Minutes
May 18, 2021, 2:00pm – 3:00pm (Via Zoom)**

Members Present: Lee Easton, Frank Cotae, Rafik Kurji, Irene Shankar, Kirk Niergarth, Maki Motapanyane, Anupam Das, Carlton Osakwe and D.A. Dirks.

Absent with Regrets: Heather McLellan

Approval of Agenda – Approved

New Business

1. Motion to support academic freedom by opposing the adoption of the IHRA definition
Appreciation was expressed to the members of the Academic Freedom Working Group, Maki and Kirk, for their work in organizing the three sessions on Academic Freedom. Members expressed appreciation for the most recent session which provided balanced perspectives on an issue that they did not know much about.

Motion that the MRFA Executive Board adopt the resolution below.

Moved: Maki Motapanyane and Seconded: Kirk Niergarth

Discussion

Motion to support academic freedom by opposing the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism.

Motion - Background

The MRFA unequivocally opposes antisemitism and all forms of racism and hatred. As the signatories of "[The Jerusalem Declaration](#)" attest, "while antisemitism has certain distinctive features, the fight against it is inseparable from the overall fight against all forms of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender discrimination." The Declaration defines antisemitism while also responding to the controversy caused by the state and institutional adoption in various jurisdictions of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's [IHRA] Working Definition of Antisemitism: "Because the IHRA Definition is unclear in key respects and widely open to different interpretations," the signatories write, "it has caused confusion and generated controversy, hence weakening the fight against antisemitism."

So, **whereas** the IHRA definition of antisemitism can be used to attribute antisemitism to a broad range of criticisms of the State of Israel and thus, the IHRA definition can be deployed to censor political speech and restrict the academic freedom of teachers and researchers who have developed critical perspectives on the policies and practices of the State of Israel;

And whereas numerous faculty associations and academic unions across Canada have opposed the potential institutional or provincial adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Be it resolved:

The Mount Royal University Faculty Association (MRFA) unequivocally supports the academic freedom of its members. This freedom includes the right to pursue research and open inquiry in an honest search for knowledge that is free from all institutional censorship, including that of the government.

Vote - Motion Carried (6 in favour, 1 opposed - D.A Dirks, and 2 abstentions)

Moving forward:

The background part of the motion will be posted on our website and Lee will report to CAFA on this decision. Should a similar motion come to CAFA Council, Lee, as the MRFA's Officer at CAFA, will vote in accordance with this Executive Board decision. If the IHRA definition is considered for adopted locally, the Association will communicate this opposition at that time.

Adjournment: Moved by Lee Easton and seconded by Franck Cotae that the meeting adjourn at 3:00pm