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About

The Blurred Lines of Racism

7-21-2021

Project Description

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SOURCE Citation

Dhanabalan, Manesa, "Project Description" (2021). *About*. 1.
https://source.sheridancollege.ca/blurred_lines_of_racism_about/1



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Project Description:

The Blurred Lines of Racism is a multimedia website focusing on an issue that is both polarizing and highly misunderstood. Although Canada is seen as being very tolerant, hate crimes here rose sharply in 2017—up 47% over the previous year. Our First Nations' communities face serious issues with water quality and access to care, and multiple police forces have been censured for racist policies.

This project examines the psychology of racism and how racism is institutionalized in our health care, judicial, and education systems. It identifies where racism comes from, where it still lives, and sheds light on debates surrounding flashpoints such as the use of the “N” word, hijabs, Islamophobia, Holocaust denial, white privilege, hi-tech racism, and cultural appropriation. As Canada is closely tied to the U.S. by location, media systems, and some aspects of culture, we also touch on issues south of our border.

Data housed within the site come from multiple sources and modes of delivery, including on-camera interviews with subject experts, people who have faced racial discrimination/bias, and even personal stories from students who developed the site; for example, in a short podcast, our project coordinator shares how she was told by relatives she wasn't as “pretty” as her sisters because her skin was too dark. We also use graphics to better explain statistics, unpack and link to a variety of academic and journalistic articles and videos related to racism, and use social media comments to capture current discourse.

The goal of the project was not to give concrete answers to some really complicated questions, but to help people understand what it feels like when you are the person who's the target of racist behaviour and how racist behaviour emerges. We see it as an important resource to both shed light on the full impact of racism and to provide access to ideas on how to effect positive change.

More info:

The Blurred Lines of Racism was a project completed by students in the Online News Production class in their second year of the Journalism program at Sheridan College. The process was a challenge on multiple fronts, including the fact there were so many race-related incidents during the two months of the site's production that it was difficult to keep current. As noted in the introduction page of the site, how could we possibly take such a divisive and systemic issue and explain the overwhelming amount of information about it on one website? The amount of data was a challenge, but so was figuring out how to responsibly deal with such sensitive subject matter. No one in the class was completely certain of the “right” language to use when writing about race and everyone who wasn't of colour was conscious of the fact they did not have the best lens with which to sieve some of the data—including the professors. However, acknowledging these challenges resulted in better journalism. We consulted with people such as social justice and crisis intervention expert Michaelann George and Sheridan's Indigenous Centre regarding how to write and talk about these issues. We had frank discussions in class about what was racist, our own inherent bias, and how we might ensure proper representation and authenticity of the content on the site. Most importantly, when a question arose, we always deferred to those with the best insight, racialized students and experts. The process was an eye opening experience for everyone involved, as can be seen in the comments made by students in “The Team” section of the site.

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