



For immediate release

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King's honours recently retired professor Sylvia D. Hamilton with five new annual awards for Black students

University of King's College is pleased to announce the establishment of the Sylvia D. Hamilton Awards, named in honour of the recently retired King's journalism professor. A noted writer, poet, filmmaker and visual artist, in addition to educator, Hamilton has devoted her career to the places, people and voices that make up the Nova Scotia Black experience, an experience Hamilton has traced back to her own ancestors coming to Nova Scotia in the years following the War of 1812.

"This award is a remarkable honour," says Hamilton, "for me, for my family and for my community."

Five Sylvia D. Hamilton Awards will be awarded annually. The award is open to African Canadian students, with a focus on African Nova Scotians, and will be open to all degree streams at King's with a preference for students in journalism and the King's/Dalhousie MFA in Creative Non-Fiction. The five awards are renewable over the usual length of each degree, each valued at \$2,020 per year, in honour of Hamilton's retirement year.

At the end of June, 2020, Hamilton, whose courses in the Bachelor of Journalism program and the Bachelor of Journalism (Honours) program have been among consistently popular offerings in the journalism program, formally retired from her position as the Rogers Chair of Communications within the School of Journalism.

"Everyone knows Sylvia has been a beloved and exemplary professor, whose engagement in the classroom is renowned," says William Lahey, King's President and Vice-Chancellor. "She has been an inspiration to all her students but in a special way to Black students and to other students from communities under-represented in both the study and practice of journalism. Naming this award in her honour is a gesture of gratitude and thanks for all that Sylvia has accomplished. It is one of the many steps we must take to ensure her legacy lives on at our university and is one of continuing inspiration to our students."

On the issue of inequality, Hamilton says change will never come unless people take action. The importance of action crystalizes when she says members of white society who consider themselves forward thinking, in favour of equality, are part of the problem if they choose not to act.

"When you don't act," says Hamilton, "racism will continue and it's those most affected by it who will continue to take on the burden, to keep speaking out, and frankly, it's tiring, it's exhausting. A reason racism continues is because people in positions of power have done little."

Hamilton then speaks of those who are doing a lot, like President Lahey and King's Board Chair Doug Ruck, two individuals Hamilton says are, "making decisions, within their spheres of power, to make lasting change."

"It is part of our mission to diversify the student body at King's," says President Lahey. "In nearly every conversation I have with members of Nova Scotia's Black communities, I hear that journalism is an important field of study for Black students."

Tim Currie, Director of the School of Journalism, also speaks to the efforts of King's, and to the contributions of Hamilton.

"We're pleased to be supporting the Canadian Association of Black Journalists with their J-School Noire project, introducing young Black students to see journalism as a career option. But this is only a beginning. We have a lot of work to do and we're delighted these awards in Sylvia's honour will contribute to our shared view of a better future."

A professor at King's since 2004, Hamilton was involved with the King's Board of Governors prior to her arrival as a professor, where, in the 1980s, she played a role in the creation of policy around racial equity. Today, we need only look around us to know that change is being ushered in. Hamilton lauds King's for continuing its push forward.

While she sees change, Hamilton is quick to add that change is something we must continuously press for because she has seen it slow and even stop.

"There are forces, and they are many," she says, "that do not want to see change. So my question is always, 'What will we see six months from now, a year from now?' What we've achieved so far is important, but this is not the time to dust off our hands and say it's all done—because it's not."

The Sylvia D. Hamilton Award joins the Prince Scholarship (\$6,000 per year) and the Dr. Carrie Best Scholarship (\$5,000 per year) to create a trio of top awards at King's specifically offered to Black students. Interested students are encouraged to contact the Registrar's Office at the University of King's College.

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***Photo Credit: Paul Adams, Adams Photography**

About the University of King's College

Established in 1789, King's College is Canada's oldest chartered university. A small and extraordinarily lively academic community located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, King's is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities and journalism, including our Foundation Year Program.

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