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UTFA Statement of Solidarity Against Gendered Violence at the University of Waterloo

July 4, 2023

The University of Toronto Faculty Association condemns the hate-motivated attack on Professor Katy Fulfer and two students at the University of Waterloo on June 28, 2023, and stands in solidarity with students, faculty, and the broader university community.

As details emerge, it is increasingly clear that this attack was motivated by misogynist and transphobic hate, and specifically targeted Prof. Fulfer's philosophy of gender course.

The media narrative is already taking shape that the perpetrator "acted alone." But we must place this attack and its motivations in a broader context of the terrifying rise in misogynist, transphobic, and white-supremacist hate in Canada and beyond. "Anti-woke" and "anti-feminist" discourses have become a rallying call for the far-right globally, specifically targeting professors and academic programs centred on feminist, queer, trans, anti-racist, decolonial, and other social-justice curricula. The US state of Florida stands out, with its ongoing efforts to remove Gender Studies and African American Studies from its higher-education institutions. But we cannot forget about similar efforts in 2017 on our own campus, noted in this UTFA statement, to establish a website "designed to place under surveillance certain kinds of academic content" by naming specific U of T professors, courses, and programs.

The attack at Waterloo last week reminds us that this right-wing politicization and fear-mongering is not only an assault on academic freedom, but it is also an attack on our physical safety and well-being – especially for women, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, racially minoritized, and disabled members of the university community who face specific, intersectional, forms of violence.

UTFA calls on its members to sign and circulate this Open Statement of Solidarity from Women's and Gender Studies Recherches Féministes, which the UTFA Executive has also endorsed. We also call on the University Administration to specify how it will follow through on President Gertler's commitment to "renew [the University's] efforts to continue to build an inclusive and safe environment for all members of the U of T community" in the wake of this violence at the University of Waterloo.

Universities must be places where students can learn freely and safely, and where faculty, librarians, staff, and students can pursue their work and learning without fear and violence.

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