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- [News](#)
- [Comment](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Magazine](#)
- [About](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Contact](#)

- [News](#)
- [Comment](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Photo](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Magazine](#)

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- [Sports](#)
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- [Video](#)
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Students protest at forum on social inequality

Protesters criticize lack of panel diversity at event where Massey Head of College Segal spoke

By [Josie Kao](#) on October 4, 2017

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Approximately a dozen student protesters walked on stage in the Isabel Bader Theatre at the beginning of the annual Keith Davey Forum on the evening October 4. The forum's discussion topic was "[Social Inequality: Is it a Real Problem? Can it be Solved?](#)" and protests criticized the panelists' perceived lack of diversity and the framing of the central question.

The students halted the discussion by standing in front of the panelists and holding signs including, "Social inequality is Real" and "Not our master," the latter referencing an [anti-Black racial slur that made reference to the "Master" title used at Massey College](#). Head of Massey College Hugh Segal was one of four panelists. Columnist Andrew Coyne, Director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy Sarah Kaplan, and Stephen LeDrew were the other speakers.

The protesters criticized what they perceived to be a lack of diversity on the panel and an "irresponsible" framing of the question of whether social inequality exists.

Chantel Cole, an organizer of the protests, told *The Varsity*, "We felt as if the guiding question of the conversation was irresponsible... You cannot have these conversations without the people that actually experience instances of social inequities and inequalities on a daily basis."

The demonstration lasted for approximately five minutes before the protesters invited audience members to walk out with them in solidarity.

The demonstration follows the controversy surrounding an incident at Massey College that where Senior Fellow Michael Marrus used a racial slur to address a Black Junior fellow, and, [six days later, resigned](#). The incident also prompted the unofficial change of Segal's title from "Master" to "Head," as well as a number of promises for equity reform.

The talk, open to the public, was organized by Victoria University, the Department of Political Science, and the Association of Political Science Students (APSS).

In advance of the forum, [APPS released a statement via Facebook](#) to distance itself from the event.

"We understand and agree with you that the question in combination with the speakers selected is problematic. The APSS had limited planning abilities in this event: We were a part of a single meeting, at which point the speakers had not yet been selected," its statement reads. The APSS notes that it is a non-partisan organization and is dedicated to open, safe, and inclusive spaces. "This is a standard to which we have historically succeeded, and will continue to succeed, to [sic]."

The APSS says it will host an independent forum on social inequality in the next semester. "In the meantime, we encourage those of you who feel as if the APSS does not adequately [sic] represent you to continue reaching out to us," the APSS' statement ends.

The Varsity has reached out to Victoria University, the Department of Political Science, and APSS for comment.

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