



Tuesday, November 5, 2019

The Got Anthropology Public Speaker Series is run by the graduate students in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. When our series began, we held events on the U of T campus, but we became concerned that public engagement was negatively influenced by the perceptions and realities of university space. We are aware that the University of Toronto does not represent an open or comfortable space for everyone, and we strongly believe that we as academics are responsible for building a relationship with the public. So, in 2017, we partnered with the Lillian H. Smith branch of the Toronto Public Library (TPL) as a way to make our talks more accessible to a wider audience. We began this partnership because we had agreed with and applauded the TPL's mandate as an inclusive space that values equity, diversity, inclusion, and integrity. While we have enjoyed our relationship with the Lillian H. Smith branch, we are greatly disappointed and deeply concerned that TPL allowed a talk by Meghan Murphy, hosted by a third party group, on October 29th, 2019.

The TPL failed because they did not uphold their core values when they moved ahead with the event that allowed a transphobic speaker who has actively called for discrimination against transwomen to give a talk on TPL property. We firmly believe that Meghan Murphy's history of hate speech was sufficient to have cancelled the event, regardless of rental procedures for library facilities. Since TPL's disappointing decision, those who oppose it are asking for others to join in a number of responsive actions. Trans folks and allies, such as Gwen Benaway, Fay and Fluffy, the Glad Day Bookshop, Alicia Elliot, Catherine Hernandez, Carrienne Leung and others are calling for 'teach-ins' that can reclaim public spaces, as well as asking any third-party groups to boycott TPL and their branches in future plans for events until they review and change their policies.

After a lengthy and difficult discussion, we at Got Anthropology came to a decision that we will not hold our 2019/2020 events in partnership with TPL. We decide to stand with the hurting members of our community by boycotting TPL and in solidarity with other organizations. Our concerns are with the leadership of TPL, not with the staff who we have found to be accommodating and welcoming throughout Got Anthro's partnership. We feel that continuing to hold our public speaker series at TPL without demanding changes in their policies goes against our values as publicly engaged anthropologists who encourage equity in our community. We believe strongly in sharing the anthropological knowledge we produce with the public and fostering relationships outside of the academy, but we need public spaces that are safe and inclusive for all members of our community. Trans rights are human rights, and TPL must adjust how it operates in order to truly call itself an institution for the public. We will hold our upcoming talk on November 26th at the University of Toronto, and we are exploring other options for public spaces to hold our future speaker series.

Thank you,  
The Got Anthropology Team