

2021-2022 OCUFA Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship (Doctoral)

Citation for Jade Da Costa

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Read by
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Member

This year's Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship for Excellence in Social Sciences, Humanities, or Arts for the doctoral level of study is awarded to Jade Da Costa, who is currently enrolled in the Sociology program at York University. York University is situated on land that is the traditional territory of many Indigenous nations (including the Huron-Wendat peoples, the Haudenosaunee peoples, the Mississaguas of New Credit and the Anishinabek Nation) and is covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant.

Da Costa is an incredible scholar and activist whose depth and breadth of academic work and community leadership inspired and delighted the selection committee. Any one of Da Costa's achievements would be impressive, but taken as a whole, they have proven themselves to be an outstanding activist and academic.

Da Costa is dedicated to education, learning, and access in all areas of life. They are an example of someone living their values, as demonstrated through projects such as creating New Sociology: Journal of Critical Praxis, which is committed to diversifying the producers of academic research and encourages historically marginalized folks to submit and publish.

Their doctoral research focuses on young queer, transgender, Black, Indigenous and people of colour activists and their level of intergenerational knowledge, particularly around public health crises. This work became even more important as Da Costa recognized through these interviews that institutional memory around the HIV/AIDS crisis in the GTHA has been largely whitewashed and lessons that could serve in public health crises such as COVID-19 had been lost. This blossomed into Da Costa integrating suggestions for a collective memory project into their work.

At the start of the pandemic, Da Costa recognized that the needs of low-income, racialized, and queer folks were not being met and they cofounded The People's Pantry to respond. The People's Pantry delivers homemade food

and pantry items to people in southern Ontario in need. Da Costa has been directly involved in organizing, fundraising, promoting, and maintaining the organization since its inception, securing grants and federal monies, managing over 500 volunteers and delivering food to over 30,000 people in southern Ontario.

Da Costa is a prolific writer and presenter who has committed to making theory accessible through their YouTube channel and mainstream media. When they recognized a lack of health resources for K-12 students, they developed an Instagram page for, and produced by, QTBIPOC that houses sexual health information.

Da Costa's dedication to the community is moving. Recently they created Paper Roads, which is a traveling social justice library that loans books to low income, racialized, and Indigenous communities in southern Ontario.

Da Costa is exceptional on standard metrics of achievement. They earn top grades and have a doctoral SSHRC, two OGS awards, community grants, teaching and writing awards and so on.

One referee wrote, "What makes their record of community and university service so outstanding and original is not merely that they saw a need and organized to meet it, but in the process of doing so, they brought critical theory to bear on community outreach, creating new organizational structures that respond quickly, carefully, and respectfully to community needs outside of a maternalistic or paternalistic charity model. Surely this is an exceptional record of leadership by any and every metric."

Da Costa's referees spoke highly of their academic leadership, saying, "I know Jade as the most promising young scholar, activist, and social influencer among all the graduate students I work with. I have never witnessed a student produce such a range of diverse scholarship and leadership in a community environment."

The Mandelbaum selection committee described Da Costa as inspiring, and there is no doubt that they will continue to inspire. For these reasons, and many more, OCUFA is pleased to award the OCUFA Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship (Doctoral) to Jade Da Costa.

Established in 2011 to honour former OCUFA Executive Director Henry Mandelbaum, the fellowship is awarded to two full-time graduate students (one master's, one doctoral) at publicly funded Ontario universities. Candidates should have demonstrated academic excellence, provided significant community service, and shown exceptional academic promise in their university careers. The financial needs of candidates may also be taken into consideration.

The successful doctoral candidate will be expected to write a short article for Academic Matters about their research within one year of receiving the fellowship.

