

# Racism and the Black World Response International Symposium

Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

August 5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001

A Black Community Initiative Marking the  
UN 3<sup>rd</sup> Decade Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia  
and Related Intolerance



# PROCEEDINGS SUMMARY

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- Canadian Race Relations Foundation
- Human Resources Development Canada
- The Multiculturalism Programme of Canadian Heritage

## REAFFIRMATION

*We will not break the Covenant with our Forebears.*

*We will press on.*

*We will keep Faith*

*and*

*We will pass the Torch.*

*We will Honour **Their** Memory.*

*Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill*

*James Robinson Johnston Chair  
in Black Canadian Studies*

## IN MEMORIAM

We Mourn the Death and Celebrate the Memory  
of Dr. Carrie Best (1903-2001)

and Others

Who Made Enduring Contributions to  
Community, Nationally and Internationally.



# Acknowledgements



## THE RACISM AND THE BLACK WORLD RESPONSE SYMPOSIUM SOCIETY

The *Racism and the Black World Response Symposium Society* is a broad based coalition of African Nova Scotian organizations that came together to help prepare the way for the unprecedented international Symposium, “*Racism and the Black World Response*”. Three Community Capacity-building preliminary activities were crafted and organized by the *Society* to raise public awareness and build participatory interest in the Symposium.

The first activity, a Martin Luther King Day **Working Meeting** to hammer out a consensus and a *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*, was held on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2001 in Cornwallis Street United Baptist Church (Halifax).

Then followed a **Town Hall Meeting** to mark the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s 1990 “Walk to Freedom”. This *Open Dialogue on Racism* took place on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2001 at the Recreation Centre of East Preston, one of the largest indigenous Black Communities in Canada, and one of the approximately 30 historically Black Communities that still exist intact in Nova Scotia.

The third preliminary activity, held on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2001, the *International Day for the Elimination of Racism*, was an *Open Hearing on Racism to Invoke Memory and Confirm Voices of Experience*. At this **Open Forum**, approximately twenty (20) witnesses submitted both verbal and written evidence about the *material reality* of Racism as experienced by them firsthand, and from their vantage point.

Committed to maximizing and optimizing meaningful Black Community participation in the Symposium, the *Society* carefully harnessed the momentum generated by these innovative preliminary lead-up activities so as to enhance the Symposium organizational process. In addition, the *Society* ensured that the Symposium content not only consistently reflected Black comfort level throughout, but also itself remained driven by the African Nova Scotian experience of endemic Racism and on-going societal marginalization.

In addition, acutely mindful of the globalized nature and context of Racism, the *Society* sought and secured the United Nations’ NGO accreditation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*.

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## Symposium Executive Summary

From August 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> 2001, more than 200 local, national and international delegates came together in Halifax, Nova Scotia, “the cradle of Canada’s indigenous Black population”, to participate in the international Symposium, *Racism and the Black World Response*. Convened at Dalhousie University under the auspices of the **James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies**, in partnership with a coalition of local and regional groups, the Symposium commemorated both the *United Nations 3<sup>rd</sup> Decade* and the *International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*. It also served as a prelude for the *UN 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference Against Racism (WCAR)*, which took place in Durban, South Africa in August 2001.

Put in proper perspective, this historic Symposium constituted yet another point on the continuum of African Diasporic initiatives — a long tradition of African Descended peoples proactively coming together to discuss the impact of racism on our individual and collective lives (e.g. First Pan-African Congress, London, England 1900).

A multi-phased and multi-faceted initiative in collective capacity-building and Black Community empowerment, the Symposium was crafted to be a participatory project grounded in the African Nova Scotian reality. Efforts to optimize local participation was fostered through a series of preliminary lead-up capacity-building activities that, above all else, addressed Black Community comfort level. For example, in commemoration of Martin Luther King Day 2001, a **Working Meeting** held at Cornwallis Street United Baptist Church brought together more than 60 representatives of organizations to discuss racism, and hammer out a *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*.

This *Principled Statement of Position* was then ratified at a **Town Hall Meeting** held in East Preston, one of the oldest historic African Canadian Communities in the country, with roots dating back to the 1780’s. Taking place during *February Black History Month*, the **Town Hall Meeting** marked the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s walk to freedom. At this time, the *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism* was opened for signatures of endorsement; and an *Oath of Good health and Long Life* was also adopted. Participants came to recognize the importance of that “experiential evidence” archived in our individual and col-

lective Memory. It became critically clear to all just how much “*Memory mattered.*”

These two preliminary activities paved the way for the third capacity-building initiative, an **Open Hearing on Racism to Invoke Memory and Confirm Voices of Experience**. At this unprecedented public forum which took place symbolically on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001 to commemorate the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, more than fifteen (15) witnesses from a variety of ages, class, and backgrounds were heard by a Bench of Eminent Persons, assisted by a Council of six Elders selected from across the province. The participation of Black Community spiritual leaders and International Observers— South Africa, Colombia, Black Law Students of Canada (BLSAC) — helped to ground the **Open Hearing** on Spirituality and Solemnity. The Hearing was a place of safety, a sanctuary, where more than 100 participants heard compelling evidence recounted by Victim-Survivors about:

- how Racism textured and coloured their own lives and the lives of their families
- the nature and effect of corrective steps taken (or not) to address Racism, and
- their own expectations and assessment of what *remedy, relief or reparation* should be implemented.

While the **Open Hearing** helped to provide the local impetus and template for the Symposium, international and national context as well as relevance for the Symposium were ensured through the active and sustained participation of Symposium Society members at various international and national meetings in Santiago de Chile (December 2000), Vienna (April 2001), Geneva (May 2001), and Toronto (March 2000, July 2001).

The Symposium was firmly rooted in the contemporary reality of racism through both our *Gathering Together on Sacred Ground* for the pre-conference Africville Reunion 2001, and an affirming inaugural event that *Acknowledged* through Culture and Art *our African identity in the Diaspora*. Upon this foundation, the Symposium was then structured around three complementary themes: *Building Global Solidarity*, *Building the Case for Reparations* and *Building International Strategies*. A post-Conference theme, *Connecting with Communities* enabled conferees to carry out site visits and establish on-site contact with some of the historically Black Communities of Nova Scotia.



## Symposium Executive Summary

The Symposium deliberations, discussions, perspectives and experiences resonated with and reflected concerns that also have preoccupied earlier WCAR related gatherings at Santiago, Vienna, Geneva, and Toronto. Speaker after speaker addressed Racism unflinchingly and advanced the discourse legally, morally, and spiritually in critically constructive ways. Pervasive on-going injury and the need for healing and repair constituted the *leitmotif* coursing through the Symposium. Such emerging themes as *population displacement* and concomitant *land loss* in Nova Scotia's Beechville and Africville, as well as in Colombia, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa, pinpointed the commonality of our experiences and drove home the necessity for us to deploy concerted efforts aimed at *International Strategizing among African Descended Peoples*. The globalization of *anti-Black Racism* or *negrophobia*, confirmed the urgency why we must focus on our **Youth** as a top priority, educating and equipping them to recognize and deal with Racism effectively. At the same time, we determined that the other over-arching priority pressing upon us is **to end the marginalization of Mother Africa and our History** by recovering, reclaiming, and rehabilitating the History of African Peoples.

The Symposium unanimously concurred that **Slavery and the Slave Trade should be declared "crimes against Humanity"** and, because of the ensuing and cloying legacy

of Racism and Racial Discrimination, the issue of **Reparations** had to be addressed in a concerted global fashion such as *Development Aid in the form of restitution for the entire African continent*. In addition, mechanisms for redress should take such innovative forms as, for example, *national and international Commissions for Reparations*. African Peoples, globally, are an injured people in need of repair – in need, first and foremost, of individual and collective Healing. It behooves us, therefore, to take the initiative to commence the Healing, starting by first recognizing our own Self-worth and the power of our Self-knowledge both as individuals, and as a collectivity.

The Symposium generated a formal NGO document, the *Halifax Declaration of Principles and Priorities* (inside back cover) that itself calls upon African Descended Peoples world-wide to adopt March 21st, *The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, as a rallying point around which African Descended Peoples will come together to assess, monitor and implement "Black Community-Affirming Strategies" to Eliminate Racism and Racial Discrimination.

February 2002

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# Foreword to Symposium

## Message from the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies

The *James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies*<sup>1</sup>, "established to bring Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns into the Academy", came together in partnership and collaboration with a coalition of local, national, regional organizations, to convene an international symposium that would specifically address the needs of People of African Descent scattered throughout the Diaspora.

The theme of this unprecedented gathering, **Racism and the Black World Response**, is topical and timely since the **Symposium** both commemorates the *United Nations' Third Decade Against Racism*, (1993-2003), and takes place during the *UN International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*.

### Importance of Nova Scotia

Community Empowerment, Capacity-Building, and Collective Strategizing, grounded in the history and reality of this "cradle of Black settlement in Canada", are the primary goals that inform this unprecedented Canadian initiative.<sup>2</sup> For, African Nova Scotians still remain Forgotten Canadians, although they comprise the largest indigenous Black Community within Canada. Here in Nova Scotia, the mark of institutional racism and systemic discrimination remains indelibly stamped on the collective daily "lifescapes" of the thirty or so extant historically Black Communities. This Institutional Racism effectively curtails access to and limits options and opportunities for education, employment, societal participation and self-fulfilment. Despite these odds, African Nova Scotians have survived collectively in dignity, and have creatively forged new strengths, honed uncommon coping skills and built solid institutions of support to "carry them over". As a result, African Nova Scotians possess a vast wealth of Community Awareness and Survival Techniques – a rich and varied stockpile of experiences that deserve to be demarginalized and shared with others; for, these examples and lessons can inform and inspire other People of African Descent whether they hail from Amber Valley (Alberta), Prince Edward Island, or Little Burgundy (Quebec) here in Canada; from Soweto or Sharpeville (South Africa), El Carmen or Lima (Peru), Marseilles or Paris (France), Bogotá or San Basilio (Colombia), Little Rock or The Bronx (USA), Vienna, Rotterdam, Brixton, Hamburg (European Union) or Jamaica....

The hidden history of African Nova Scotian Communities is symbolic of the generalized global obfuscation of Black History. It typifies what I term "**Race-Erase**" – signifying the concomitant erasure of Black peoples as very active Agents who also do contribute to the Making of History<sup>3</sup>; and the endemic obliteration of our past and on-going contributions to the evolving Human Story, both in Canada and elsewhere.

### Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> An unprecedented national initiative established in 1996 at Dalhousie University "to bring Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns into the Academy", the **Johnston Chair** honours the memory of James Robinson Johnston, the first African Nova Scotian to graduate from a university, to earn a law degree, and to practise law in Canada.
- <sup>2</sup> See generally Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, "Multicultural and Intercultural Education: The Canadian Experience", 12:1 *La revue québécoise de droit international* (1999) p.70-89.
- <sup>3</sup> Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, "Diversity - A Challenge for Continuous Learning," National Parole Board Annual Conference Keynote Address, Montreal, June 1998. In *National Parole Board Conference Proceedings* (Ottawa: August, 1998); Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, *Ethical Lawyering: A Must in the Matter of Colour*, 8th Annual Wickwire Memorial Lecture., Dalhousie Law School, November 1998.(Unpublished)
- <sup>4</sup> *Idem*.

Like a field lying fallow, Nova Scotia is richly endowed in Black History, though choked and smothered by the weeds of neglect and disinterest. Thanks to deeply entrenched racially discriminatory practices, the body of evidence bringing together the various narratives that recount and illuminate the "**material reality**" of Black Survival in Canada remains virtually intact and untouched. The instructive patterns – of subjugation and survival, of ostracism and overcoming, of hostility and hope – are very present in forms that are spiritual, archaeological, cultural, medical, political, economic, and social.... Even in a narrow and discrete discipline area like Law, African Nova Scotians have made irreversible and meaningful impacts that have altered the course of development of Legal Culture in this country. Whether in areas of Land Ownership or organized Community Self-Help, Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage or Educational Inroads, African Nova Scotians continue, consistently, to trail-blaze, to mark the pathways, and to chart the course for meaningful equality in Canada.

### Importance and Implications of Symposium

The 21st Century has already cast its shadow on our Present. As we look towards the Future, we in Canada are only now beginning to acknowledge – albeit with a somewhat fatalistic resignation – those great seismic shifts that have for quite some time already rocked Canadian identity at its very core and brought about irrevocable changes in this country's demographic landscape.<sup>4</sup> Canada must now answer to a new population profile. And Canada is not alone. Other Nation States of the International Community are also fast coming to this new level of awareness.<sup>5</sup>

*The centrality of Africa to World culture can no longer be denied.* Neither can the determinant roles African Descended Peoples played and continue to play in shaping World History and International Affairs be disputed any longer.<sup>6</sup> Communities, locally, nationally, regionally and internationally must abandon "fossilized thinking" and respond pro-actively to both the compelling seismic shifts in Canada's and the World's demographic landscape, and to the irreversible movements of Globalization.<sup>7</sup> *If for no other reason than that it makes good business sense.*

### Importance of "Race" to the International Community

Throughout the half century or so of the United Nation's existence, the factor of "Race" is the one single issue that has by far commanded and commandeered the sustained attention, as well as consumed the concerted efforts of the International Community.<sup>8</sup> "Race" is an issue so undeniably pressing that it has systematically compelled world consensus.<sup>9</sup> The mantra of "Race" resonates throughout, for example, a plethora of international instruments from the *International Bill of Rights* down through a variety of *Conventions, Covenants, Treaties, Resolutions, Declarations, Proclamations, Statements, Decades,*

<sup>5</sup> Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, "Multicultural and Intercultural Education", *supra* note 2 at 87.

<sup>6</sup> Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, *Africana Studies at McGill: A Case for Calibrating Responsibility and Compelling Authority*, Africana 2000 – 30 Years Later Anniversary Conference, Montreal, McGill University, February 4-6, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Thornhill, *Ethical Lawyering*, *supra*, at note 3.

<sup>8</sup> By way of illustration, race, colour, national and ethnic origin head the lists of illicit motives of discrimination enumerated in international and regional instruments (e.g. *The International Bill of Rights, Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, First and Second Decades to Combat Racism, Convention Against Slavery*, multiple *Resolutions* condemning Apartheid as a "crime against humanity").

<sup>9</sup> As typified by the four UNESCO Statements on Race in Ashley Montagu, *UNESCO Statement on Race*. An annotated elaboration and exposition of the four statements on race issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Third Edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.

# Foreword to Symposium



*International Years, International Days, Special Procedures, Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups, Committees, NGOs, Studies, Reports...*<sup>10</sup>

## Significance of "Race" to the African Diaspora

The globalization of the "world village" dictates that we now must find new and workable ways to also "deal with the emerging globalization of [R]acism".<sup>11</sup> Issues of Racism remain central to any corrective(s) purporting an unequivocal commitment to meaningful social change.

There is a pressing need to raise the level of debate and improve the quality of discourse around "Race". Like Aboriginal nations everywhere, African Descended Peoples too are increasingly assuming a Self-Determinant stance and (pro)actively claiming our right "to exercise that Agency, Autonomy, and Authority to which the legacy of Chattel property has deemed us as dis-entitled."<sup>12</sup>

In order to move forward, it is Peoples of African Descent who must frame the discourse, articulate the problematic and identify the solutions necessary. For, it is the patient who is optimally positioned to accurately inform the medical practitioner of the affliction and give an indication of the degree of remedy, relief, or reparation necessary. *When it comes to tabling, calibrating and assessing our experiential evidence with Racism, we African Descended Peoples are the witnesses privy to intimate knowledge of racism. We constitute the veritable "Voices of Authenticity".*<sup>13</sup>

The perspectives of Peoples of African Descent demand a paradigm shift from the way things are perceived to be, to the *material reality* of the way things really are. This radical shift will put into the proper perspective:

- Policies of anti-racist education that are aimed at eradicating Racism.<sup>14</sup>
- Correctives that are re-distributive and geared to societal transformation.<sup>15</sup>
- More Visible Partnerships on an equal footing, wherein reciprocal accountability of partners prevails and Power is equitably shared.<sup>16</sup>

For, equal sharing of Power really signifies a **meaningful sharing of Power** – of opportunity, of access, of responsibility, of information, of resources, of perspectives, of Appraisal power, of Veto Power...<sup>17</sup> And, in the concrete sense, the sharing of space – of boardroom space, blue-print space, front page space, prime-time space, centre-stage space....<sup>18</sup> For, after all, from the vantage point of our collective Black experience in Canada, equality must signify an overarching change of mindset, a Global Village paradigm shift – *"un réaménagement des méninges à travers notre village planétaire"* – wherein we will all come to acknowledge that:

*No single individual, group, collectivity, People, or Nation State is entitled to sit, forever unchallenged, at the Centre of Scrutiny.*<sup>19</sup>

This Symposium is about bringing Truth as we see and live it into the open for public scrutiny. This space is about Agency, Autonomy, and Authority vested in Black skin. It is about empowerment and, above all, it focuses concern on consideration of and respect for Black comfort level. This Symposium is also a safe haven heavily invested with collective Cultural Memory, the culture of survival. For, the habit of survival has dictated that, to make it through each day successfully, for the most part, we African Descended Peoples, must often banish to the far corners of our mind, and bury in the recesses of our consciousness the multitude and daily relentless onslaught of micro-aggressions and macro-assaults that spirit murder us, both individually and collectively.<sup>20</sup>

This Symposium is **Not** about vengefulness. This space is meant to be a comfort zone of safety, a Sanctuary geared toward collective recovery, healing and empowerment. This Symposium initiative constitutes an act of agency to end *Race-erase* – that contrived invisibility of Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns.

May today's Symposium prove to be a teaching moment and an opportunity for learning for all of us. May its resonance combine with and amplify other *Voices of Authenticity* sounded against Racism in these other global efforts deployed over the centuries. May this International Symposium, *Racism and the Black World Response*, heal and energize us, even as it empowers us to move forward, together.

*Dr. Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill  
Symposium Co-chair and President  
Racism & the Black World Response  
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*Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
August 2001*

<sup>10</sup> See generally Thornhill: *Multicultural and Intercultural Education*, *supra* at note 2.

<sup>11</sup> G. J. S. Dei, *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice*, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996) at 58.

<sup>12</sup> Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, *Minority Women and Law*. Unpublished Lecture, Windsor University, Faculty of Law, November 1986; Thornhill, *Property and Appropriation*. Unpublished Paper, National Conference on "New Scholarship on Race, Culture and Law". Canadian Association of Law Teachers (CALT) Learned Societies of Canada, Charlottetown, P.E.I., June 1992.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*. See also *Racism and the Law*, Guest Lecture and Faculty Training Workshop, Queen's University, March 1989 (Unpublished); and *Racism and Canadian Legal Culture*, Paper, Critical Legal Theory and the Canadian Justice System Conference, Learned Societies of Canada, Queen's University, June 1988 (Unpublished); "Guidelines for Implementing More Visible Partnerships in Schools." In Ronald J. Samuda and Shiu L. Kong, *Multicultural Education: Programmes and Methods* (Kingston and Toronto: Intercultural Social Sciences Publication Inc., 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Anti Racism or anti-racist Education must be predicated on the primary goal of eliminating Racism, rather than settling for reducing Racism.

<sup>15</sup> Multicultural and intercultural education, like Human Rights Education, cannot afford to and should not "just happen", moving in and moving out, to leave behind an unchanged status quo with people and Environment untouched.

<sup>16</sup> See Thornhill, "Multicultural and Intercultural Education", *supra* note 2 at 87.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> See Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, *supra* note 2 at 88-89.

<sup>20</sup> Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill, *Ethics in the Legal Profession*, 8:1 *Alberta Law Review* 1994.



# Affirming the Spirit of Africville

Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001

## Gathering Together on Sacred Ground

Hosted by the Africville Genealogy Society



Photos by Paul Adams, Adams Photography

Africville Reunion, Africville, Nova Scotia,  
August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001

### *We Are Africville*

*Irvine Carvery, President, Africville Genealogy Society*

We are the little children who lie in the grass back the field daydreaming as clouds dance overhead.

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who hears “blind” Howie Byers call out, “Com’ere one of you little children, I want you to go to the store for me.”

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who wakes up on an early Saturday morning to the smell of cardboard burning as Whoppie Sparks burns the boxes from his store.

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who sits quietly in church while the congregation sings and sways to the spirit of an old spiritual.

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who fall to sleep to the sounds of the whistle and beat of the 9 o’clock freight train moving through the village.

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who feels the wind against their faces as we speed down Aunt Noggie’s hill on sleds.

*We are Africville.*

We are the little children who takes their first dives into the water from the big rock down Kildare’s Field.

### *We are Africville.*

We are the little Children who sit in Grandmother’s Sun porch listening to Great-Grandfather tell of life in Africville when he was a young boy.

*We are Africville.*

We are grown adults with little children of our own who will never share the things and places we have known.

*We are Africville.*

Excerpted from *Africville Genealogy Society*,  
“*The Spirit of Africville*. Halifax: Formac Publishing Company, 1992.



© Dr. Ruth Johnson, 1949

# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001



## INAUGURAL REMARKS

**Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**  
Symposium Co-Chair

*James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, Dalhousie University*

In my capacity as first holder of the **James Robinson Johnston Endowed Chair in Black Canadian Studies**, and on behalf of the members of the *Racism and the Black World Response Symposium Society*, I thank you for having responded in such fulsome numbers to the invitation to this Symposium Inaugural Event.

The **James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies**, which I am the first scholar to hold, is named for James Robinson Johnston, the first African Nova Scotian who, 103 years ago managed to defy the odds, break through, and graduate with a Law degree from Dalhousie Law School. Established to “bring Black culture, reality perspectives experience and concerns into the Academy”, the **Johnston Chair** constitutes a ground-breaking national initiative. So too does today’s gathering!

The mandate of the **Johnston Chair** has been the source and font of inspiration for the Symposium, *Racism and the Black World Response*. And, accordingly, the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies in partnership and collaboration with a coalition of local, national and regional organizations convened an international symposium that would specifically address the needs of Peoples of African Descent, scattered throughout the Diaspora.

The theme of this unprecedented gathering, “*Racism and the Black World Response*”, is topical and timely since the Symposium both commemorates the *United Nations’ 3rd Decade Against Racism (1993-2003)*, and takes place during the *United Nations’ International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance*.

Black Community Empowerment, African Nova Scotian Capacity-building and Collective Strategizing grounded in the history and reality of Nova Scotia, “the cradle of indigenous Black settlement in Canada”, are the primary goals that inform this unique Canadian initiative. “Unique” because this afternoon’s gathering constitutes the prelude to an unprecedented Canadian “first”.

Nova Scotia is an appropriate geographic choice, and the inauguration at this time of the Art Exhibit, “*Black Body: Race, Resistance, Response*”, is a more than fitting prelude to herald the Symposium. For, Ladies and Gentlemen, “*black body*” is central to understanding the history and “*material reality*” of Racism visited unrelentingly on Peoples of African Descent. You see, enslavement of African Peoples and the Slave Trade originated in black bodies which were de-humanized by others, objectified by others, commodified



*For, “black body” is central to understanding the history and “material reality” of Racism visited unrelentingly on Peoples of African Descent.*  
– **Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**

by others, quantified as units of labour by others, and converted into chattel property to be possessed and dispensed with by others. Human beings of African origin were deemed to be, and were treated as expendable objects—spiritually, socially, politically, legally, and emotionally, in every way possible.

The Art exhibit, both here in the Dalhousie Art Gallery, and on-line on the world wide web, constitutes an act of *Agency* – of re-claiming our bodies for ourselves.

It is an act of *Autonomy* – of re-configuring for ourselves who and what the possibilities are/might be for our bodies.

It is an act of *Authority* – of re-habilitating and re-naming... of self-definition.

And above all, it is an act of *Liberation* – of self-determination, of re-covering and re-imposing Respect for our Bodies. In short, it is an act of *Re-Affirmation*.

As **James Robinson Johnston Chair**, and on behalf of the members of the *Racism and the Black World Response Symposium Society*, I now take this opportunity, publicly, to thank Mrs. Susan Gibson Garvey, the Curator and Director of the Dalhousie Art Gallery, and her Staff, for their valued and immeasurable collaboration. I would also like to thank the Exhibit’s insightful and able Curator, Ms. Pamela Edmonds, her talented team of innovative artists, and the Black Artists’ Network of Nova Scotia (BANNS), for having creatively moved us further along the continuum in the fight to eradicate Racism.

The Exhibit and the discussions it will surely generate will contribute to raising the level of debate, and improving the quality of discourse around Racism. For, having made this ground-breaking contribution to the *Racism and the Black World Response International Symposium*, I myself, and members of the *Global Community of the Concerned* do thank you.

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# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001



Black Body: Race, Resistance, Response Opening  
 August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001

## THE BLACK BODY AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE

**Pamela Edmonds**

Curator, Black Body:Race Resistance Response, Dalhousie Art Gallery

The arts remain one of the powerful, if not the most powerful, realms of cultural resistance and response – a space for awakening critical consciousness and exploring new visions. While a number of contemporary art exhibitions over the past decade have sought to include the work of Black artists and other people of colour, many of the major survey shows have not engaged in critical debate about Black artists' contributions to mainstream art. Canadian cultural critic, Rinaldo Walcott comments on the void of critical debate surrounding Black expressive culture in Canada: "What one finds is exuberant celebration or racist denunciation...The result is that many Black Canadian expressive works are discussed only within the contexts of the artists' autobiography or as anti-racism gestures meant to help fix the nation." This oversimplification of the variety and complexity of Black artistic production impedes what might be the arts real impact in a broader context.

*The principal curatorial strategy of this exhibition is to throw light on contemporary Black Canadian art through the idea of the "Black body" as a signifier that reveals the constructions of race, place and identity within the Black diaspora.*

This exploration in essence, celebrates the black body as a site of resistance and the place of new subjectivities and perspectives. Considering the "othered" body as a signifier and racism

as a social construct that has dominated the history of people of African descent, I decided to focus on the flesh and blood of this symbol and its reality because of the body's unifying nature, the body being foremost an image and concept we can all identify with. Despite the figurative body's long traditions in art, the black body is still rarely represented outside of its "otherness". Though its representation has become more visible in contemporary practices, its actual presence is still rarely discussed or understood within mainstream traditions as a site that influences social attitudes.

This continual process of self-making and self-inventing is spurned by and made possible by overcoming a colonized body, mind and soul. Thinking less exclusively about the meaning of "blackness" and more inclusively about what is meant by being a global citizen, these artists defy stereotypical notions that all "black experience" has an essential nature. In the reality of today's Canada, these artists continue to re-define themselves through the empowerment of their technical skill and vision. In the process, they engage us in an aesthetic dialogue with a political, social and cultural awareness that broadens our awareness of racial borders. In response, it is hoped that the multiple and diverse portrayals of these traditions and aesthetics will continue to be recognized inspiring new thought and new ways of being and seeing "blackness".

# LOCATING THE BLACK BODY IN CANADIAN ART: A PERSPECTIVE

Anthony Joyette

Montreal Artist & Contributing Essayist to “Black Body” Exhibit

One could not have asked for a better topic – the Black Body – as a metaphor and symbol of identity in Canadian art, or a better place to introduce the works of Black artists within their Canadian space than Nova Scotia, it being the place where the first Black community was founded.

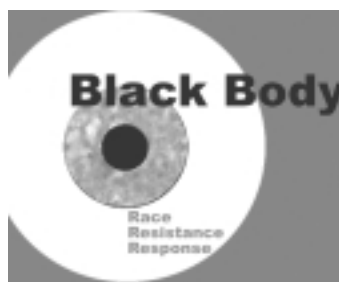
In art, the Black Body represents both the native Black and the naturalized Black perspectives, categories that embody the experiences and ideas in Black Canadian thought. The “native” perspective relates to all the ideas expressed by Black people who are born in Canada and the “naturalized” perspective represents all the ideas expressed by Black people who were born elsewhere and took up residency in Canada, through the legal process of naturalization. Each perspective brings with it unique ways of expression that evolve from different cultural mind sets, awarenesses and influences that are at the foundation of Black creativity in Canada today. I feel such categories make it easier for one to look at styles, symbolism, and interpretive meanings in art and to develop comparative themes.

The Black Body in Canadian art is proactive and at times aggressive in its desire to become an element of mainstream consumption. Black Canadian art is comprised of distinct forms from a range of traditional schools. Native Black Canadian and naturalized Black artists both show strong affinities to North American schools. This can be seen in the works of artists from the Maritimes and Western Canada, where there is a history of Black American migration. Many contemporary naturalized and native artists express a style steeped in social realism – the social, political and racial struggle of Black folk life – influenced by American Black Consciousness and the

racial nature of North American culture. Others have been influenced by forms of conceptionalism or abstraction. Naturalized artists from cultures outside North America often adopt European styles of modernism and postmodernism that relate to their colonial past. Other influences are the African and Haitian schools, whose forms and compositions are distinctly rich in their own systems of symbolism and meaning. Much of this art can be found in the urban centres of British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario, where a number of naturalized artists exist.

Some of the things we need to do in order to keep the focus of the Black Body within its Canadian sphere are: The term “Canadian art” should no longer be interpreted exclusively as art by Aboriginal and mainly White artists in Canada, but also should be applied to the works of Black Canadian and other artists of colour. Until this happens, contemporary Canadian art history will not reflect the complete range of its multiethnic or pluralist culture.

*The Black Body must come to terms with its own diversity and White exclusionism by focusing on a dialogue of its own making, from the ideas of Black writers, artists, historians, critics and cultural commentators in our community.* We need to seek the ideological underpinnings of our artworks, history and culture, as well as an understanding of the varied symbolic and aesthetic values of Black Canadian art. We need philosophical theories that will ground the Black Body within this nation, this place and time, and to educate people about, and encourage a greater appreciation for, its value as a currency of Black Canadian culture.



## THE BANNS VIRTUAL GALLERY

On August 5, 2001, the art exhibition *Black Body: Race, Resistance, Response* opened at the

Dalhousie Art Gallery. Simultaneously, the online art exhibition of the same name went live on [www.BlackBody.ca](http://www.BlackBody.ca). It explores the Black Body through the eyes of Black artists, three from Nova Scotia and three from Ontario. Their fifteen works range from painting and sculptural installations to photography and video.

The project, [www.BANNS.ca](http://www.BANNS.ca) is part of a long-term vision of the Black Artists' Network of Nova Scotia (BANNS) to bring

art directly to the public at low cost with high quality presentation. Black Body was the first exhibit posted on the site. The philosophy is to portray art within a virtual gallery that itself constitutes a work of art. The user interface is designed to encourage the viewer to explore and discover both the art and artists. Some of the works of art are offered for sale online.

In August 2001, one of the oldest historic African Nova Scotian Communities in Canada was showcased online. **Home: The Art of Preston** was previewed on [www.BANNS.ca/Home](http://www.BANNS.ca/Home). Based on exhibitions exhibited at the Dalhousie Art Gallery in 2000 and the Dartmouth Heritage Museum in 2001, the exhibit comprises twenty-four works by sixteen Nova Scotian artists that speak of the life, culture and beauty of the Preston area.

Since August 2001, the site has been visited over 4,700 times by people from more than 30 different countries. Dr. Pemberton Cyrus designed and developed the site.

# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001

## IN THE MATTER OF MEMORY

M. NourbeSe Philip

Poet, Novelist, Essayist, Playright, Lawyer

*A person who has no past, only a future is a person with little reality.*

Octavio Paz

*The yearning to transcend the insubstantialities of memory and return to a full knowledge of the past (and an unspoiled sense of the future) is an impossible one, but can be a rich source of imaginative insights.*

Liz Heron

*History is a dream from which I'm trying to awaken.*

James Joyce

### The Nightmare of History

For me history is not so much a dream from which I am trying to awaken as a nightmare. As a writer in the process of writing and re-writing the essentials of my reality, I use memory to awaken from this nightmare. Carlos Fuentes writes that "we remember the future (and) imagine the past"; much of my work as poet and writer takes place within the boundaries delimited by a remembrance of the future and imagination of the past. There can, however, be no imagining of the past or remembrance of the future without a confrontation with history, a history or histories stolen, lost, mislaid, erased, embellished, hidden or found.

Memory, I suggest, is the activity that fuels the imagining of the past and the remembrance of the future, but is there any validity to memory *per se*, or do we indulge in it for the sake of nostalgia? The English critic Terry Eagleton writes that it

*"is sentimentalism to believe that memories are valuable in themselves. To write of regional or rural memories...is often a way of evading the struggle with meaning, for such lovingly preserved experiences seem deceptively meaningful in themselves, and the act of narrating them assumes an auratic significance for which it has not sufficiently paid."*

Memory, however, can be a way of coming to terms with meaning, or even discovering meaning, as well as serving many other purposes:



*The claim for reparations is both about money and not about money, . . . it is in the making of the claim that the invisible matter of our memory that has been hidden for so long becomes more visible. It is, in the final analysis, about our ancestors . . . and our children. It is only in so doing that we remember our future and imagine our past.*  
 – M. NourbeSe Philip

- compensation for the earlier erasure of memories
- prevention of future mistakes to understand the why of something
- to grieve at a later time when earlier grief was not possible
- to correct mistakes and write the `truth' of history
- to dispute lies for those whose lives appear meaningless, memory may be the only place to begin

When the African came to the New World she brought with her nothing but her body and all the memory and history which that body could contain. I use body here to include mind, which is in my opinion, very much a part of and an extension of body; I also believe that within the `body' as the word is commonly used, resides an intelligence – including memory and knowledge – which is as important to the whole existence of the person as the intelligence we come to associate with the mind.

What I learned from the slave is that I can control my body. Music, movement – this was outside the reach of the oppressor. The creative mind. The body intelligence. The imagination. This we could control. When I'm dancing, I'm dancing for my self and my people. This is ours. (Rex Nettleford, *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1988).

The text of the African's history and memory was inscribed upon and within that body which would become the repository of all the tools necessary for spiritual and cultural survival.



# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001



## M. NourbeSe Philip...

At her most unmanageable, the slave removed her body from control of the white master, either by suicide, or by maroonage – running away, where the terrain allowed, to highlands and mountains to survive with others as whole people and not as chattels.

And the body with its remembered and forgotten texts is of supreme importance in negotiating and balancing the relationships between history and memory.

How does one make memory 'matter' and what is nature of the impulse that attempts to make memory material. One of the most obvious manifestations of this materiality is the erection of memorials: the many statues along University Avenue commemorating Canada's involvement in World War I and II for instance; the Viet Nam War Memorial in the United States and the AIDS Quilt are examples that come to mind. And in making memory material, culture plays a profound role. Further, in the absence of material evidence of the events being remembered, such as slavery for instance, how is memory made material.

Some of the most enduring and powerful images in modern times have been those associated with the Jewish Holocaust. For those of us who are not Jews these images have enabled us to enter this experience and to come to some point of sharing in the pain, the outrage and horror of these events. And among these images some of the most poignantly powerful have been those of piles of ordinary things like shoes, toothbrushes, household utensils and so on. The power of these images lies in their ability to underscore the absence and loss of the humans to whom these things once belonged. And so they become tangible evidence of the event that one wants remembered or to remember. When thinking of the cataclysmic events around the enslavement of Africans in the New World, it appeared to me that there exist no similar markers – and certainly not on the same scale – of these historical events, or of the memories generated by them. How then does memory function in the virtual absence of these markers.

The work will explore the reasons for these absences as well as how memory functions in such circumstances. And more particularly, how the body becomes implicated in the materializing of memory. Although the events to which I refer have been recorded by history, for many reasons, not the least of which is the tension between history and memory (explored later), this fails to satisfy that impulse to materialize memory. Memory, I suggest, is to be found in the interstices, the silences, the half said, the stories that are passed on, the markers of absence.

Pierre Nora writes in his work **Between Memory and History**:

*“Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition...At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is anti-theoretical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it.”*

The tensions between memory and history, I suggest, become particularly visible in certain cultural conflicts. For instance, among the arguments put forward by the supporters of the production of *Show Boat* was the historical one: “This is the way things were.” Those opposed to the event not only questioned the historical accuracy of events, but also drew on the language of memory – the memory of slavery and what it meant to those who had suffered through it. This becomes particularly significant, given that those opposed to the show were not themselves African Americans but were from the Caribbean. The collision of these two languages – the language of history and that of memory was also evident in the issue of appropriation, where the history of the novel – freedom of the imagination for instance – came into conflict with language of story-telling at the heart of which is memory. This conflict as much as anything else explains the zero-sum aspect of cultural conflicts like these.

## The Memory of Africa

My first introduction to Africa as an idea or a place in a public way – apart from Tarzan movies – occurred when I was about 13 years old. It came through the music of Trinidad and Tobago – calypso. That year a song was sung by The Mighty Sparrow: *Congo Man*. The lyrics:

*Two white women travelling through Africa  
found themselves in the hands of a cannibal witch doctor  
he cook up one and and he eat one raw  
it taste so good he wanted more  
more more more more  
he wanted more  
I envy the Congo man...*

The chorus repeated the refrain: *I never eat a white meat yet*. Even to my then 13-year-old ears there was something incontrovertibly sexual in the way Sparrow laughed as he repeated the phrase “I never eat a white meat yet.” It has only recently come to me all the levels on which Africa was working in this calypso, in a Black country where the descendants of Africans comprise the majority.



# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001

## M. NourbeSe Philip...

In the culture of Trinidad and Tobago the calypsonian performs the role similar to that of the griot in African societies. S/he is historian, commentator, raconteur and story teller. The sans humanité (without tradition) tradition of the calypso gives the calypsonian licence to sing about anything and the latter, therefore, becomes the mechanism by which events are recorded publicly.

While there was a resounding silence about Africa in the official and public culture, including school culture, here was a calypso which was extremely popular that was positioning Africa in a very public way. But the ways in which Africa is contradictory and problematic: the African is represented as a cannibal witch doctor – an essentially European construction. Cannibalism then transmutes into a sexual cross-racial message which attempts to upset the hierarchy of race. Whiteness is longed for – desired – but it also becomes something to be laughed at. And last, but not least, the issue of gender in a patriarchal society – this transgressive behaviour takes place through the woman's body – the White woman's body – which is consumed and eaten. In both the raw and cooked state. And Sparrow had not even read Levy Strauss!

The tension between history and memory in this episode is visible – cannibal Africans eating White people, but there is also a memory with more than a trace of resistance – albeit still within the patriarchal, White supremacist culture that is represented in the dyad – Black man/White woman. Let us we cut to some 30 years later, on my very first trip to Africa, and see what has happened to the place and the memory. That is Africa.

### Journal Entry

I only understand now what I meant when I said it was important for me to be invited back to Africa – after all I didn't choose to leave, did I – and what is this 'I' – 3, 4 centuries – outside – away from the continent and I still talk as if something happened to me. Yes I am flying back to Africa. Isn't that what we always wanted to do? – put on our wings – our silky black, feathery wings and just get on up there and fly. All the way back. And away from this place – it has no name yet; it's only this place – across the great water, the great black water. The Indians called it Kali Pani – what do we call it? Why haven't we named it? This great black thing that carries us bears us up – across to somewhere else. But I am flying back to Africa.

what shall I take with me – when I fly back? Back to Africa? What shall I take? The same thing – the very same thing I came with. And nothing but. The Body. Why do I cry? Why this grief? This panic? I'm only going to Africa. Forget about

the back, just think of going to Africa. Forward. To Africa. Oh, but I am flying. Flying back. To Africa. Is this what I have been avoiding? Is this why I haven't ever allowed myself to feel the urge. To go to Africa. Because it would be too overwhelming. Back to Africa/ back backward/ primitive Africa/ Conrad's Africa. Whose Africa is the one I take my body back to? The Africa of Goma, Bukavu and Rwanda? Rwanda. A word that slips off the tongue so easily now. As if we grew up saying it. Only 6 months ago it was foreign – so strange to the eyes shaped by English letters – an R and a W. How does the tongue – a tongue split by English – work that one? RrrrWanda! Made so easy to say by the constant repetition of death and dying. They create geography lessons of death – these words – and of massacres and refugees. Hutu, Tutsi – easy, so easy – whose Africa?

What will I take with me?

*1 head*

*1 torso*

*2 lungs – breathing rapidly*

*1 heart – don't forget the heart still steadily beating its refrain – its praise, its prayer to living*

*2 lips to fall silent*

*& 1 soul to fly off*

*the spirit – possibly*

*A Body*

*one body – much used*

*a black body – back to Africa*

...

*But what shall I take with me to Africa back to the future of Africa*

*what should I take?*

*A Body of course*

*1 womb – unoccupied but used before*

*2 breasts much used*

*2 arms with hands attached*

*10 fingers in working condition*

*2 legs – thighs and lower legs intact and balanced on*

*2 feet*

*10 toes*

*1 tongue – to lie quiet*

*2 eyes*

*1 nose*

*2 ears*

*1 head*

What am I taking to Africa, though? I laugh – practise how I shall kiss the ground. When I get there. My son says that I should – a terrible beating in my heart; it's been so long, so long and it's such a long way away – a long way away. Am going into it the same way I came out – blind.

# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001



M. NourbeSe Philip...

And I remember now that there was another memory. Of Africa. An earlier one than the “Congo Man.” I am no more than six years old and we are being visited by two Coptic priests. From Africa! Long black robes. Black hats and long hair in curls. Handsome men. From Ethiopia! Visiting the Orthodox Christian Church in Tobago. I don’t remember Africa so much as that one of them wanted to marry my sister. She was about nine years old and he wanted my mother to promise her to him. When she came of age she would be sent to him in Africa, or I suppose he would come and get her. This memory of Africa is lost – was lost – buried under the Congo Man. Sexuality and the patriarchy play a part in both of them. The woman or her body being the object – always. Of desire. As is Africa.

So I did take with me my body. To Africa. But I also took a stamp – known as an Affidavit stamp. When composing an affidavit, which is sworn testimony, if there are any accompanying documents which are referred to in the sworn statement, this is stamped with a stamp that reads: This is exhibit A or B attached to the affidavit of X, sworn before me this – day of – 1995. I came across it in my drawer shortly before I left and knew that I had to take it because a part of that journey to Africa had to do with finding the evidence. The evidence of something that had happened. Something which had been recorded in History. Something which I had a memory of. But my own thoughts, my feelings, the memory of my body were not enough. I longed for evidence – hard evidence – and the affidavit stamp would help to solidify the evidence. This is exhibit A, attached to the affidavit of X sworn...

Where is the tangible evidence that these events did take place – the African holocaust? In a society and culture which have been so silent about these events, how do you begin to convince yourself – “This is exhibit A...” – let alone others that something happened. Something terrible occurred which continues to cast a long shadow on present events. There isn’t even agreement on the numbers – 10 million, 15 million, 30 million, 100 million. Africans. Brought out of Africa.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Meditation on Ma –  
ma ma  
mat  
matter mutter  
matter  
what is the matter with Africa  
with Africa’s matter  
Africa matters  
and is  
matter*

*matter is Africa  
our memories becoming matter  
the matter of our memory  
Africa becomes the matter of our memory  
what matter our memory  
what is  
the matter with our memory  
the matter of our memory  
memory matter  
matted memory  
matter – the substance of something – the substance of mem-  
ory is always imaginary – and if not imaginary then of the  
mind and often, therefore, we search for the tangible sub-  
stance of those memories – the physical matter so to speak  
that could underpin our memories – of initial belonging, then  
loss –*

*in the matter of memory  
for the matter in the matter of  
memory  
of Africa  
the matrix of  
all human life  
so that Africa’s matter’s in each of us – the DNA of  
Dengesh  
(the Europeans called her Lucy)  
Africa’s matter’s in us  
Africa matters to us  
Africa matters  
we search  
of memory  
making memory matter  
and therefore material  
There is very little material evidence of what happened to us  
all we have are memories  
can memories keep you warm  
put food in your belly  
give you a job  
keep you  
alive*

I started out about talking about the nightmare of history and how memory becomes the pathway through which I awake from that nightmare and I come to a character in a novel on which I am presently working. Her thoughts suggest that memory and remembering can happen in other ways:

*“she was being remembered was all she  
knew, being remembered. No words for  
it yet – or maybe she hadn’t yet found them—  
it wasn’t so much that she was remem-  
bering the dreams as the images were all*



# Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora

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**M. NourbeSe Philip...**

*coming back unbidden, with an energy all  
their own, flooding that space in her mind—  
where she believed her memory to be,  
threatening to drown her.”*

## **Postscript**

We make our memory matter in at least two senses: The very fact that so many of us have kept our memories alive is a way of making them matter, as in being important—to us, to others. These memories are important because nations became rich as a consequence of the enslavement and forced labour of Africans; these memories are important because Africans were impoverished not only materially, but culturally and spiritually as their cultures, languages and spirituality were forbidden and destroyed. Those events matter for any number of reasons, not least of which is that they provide a context for the racism that is so much a part of the lives of Africans today.

The issue of reparations has direct bearing on the second aspect of making our memory matter and that is in literally making our memory matter and, therefore, material—something to be touched, seen and acknowledged. The link between these two aspects is an important one in that we cannot and must not emphasize the latter aspect of making memory matter at the expense of the former. While it is important to claim material reparations, we must keep central the spiritual component of making our memories matter. The claim for reparations is both about money and not about money, because it is in the making of the claim for material reparations that the invisible matter of our memory that has been hidden for so long becomes more visible. It is, in the final analysis, about our ancestors, our remembering and honouring of them, and our children. It is only in so doing that we remember our future and imagine our past.

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# Building Global Solidarity

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## OPENING ADDRESS

**Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**

Professor of Law

James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, Dalhousie University

**R**espected Elders, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends. As holder of the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, and on behalf of the members of the *Racism and the Black World Response Symposium Society*, I welcome you to this Symposium. A Canadian first, and an unprecedented initiative for Nova Scotia, home of Canada's largest indigenous Black Community. Welcome to this historic Event!.

First of all, I would like to formally convey to you the *Regrets* and *Well Wishes* of certain international participants who, at the last minute, because of circumstances beyond their control, found themselves impeded from attending from attending this Symposium.

### **Regrets from Barbados**

#### ***Commission for Pan-African Affairs***

Contrary to our initial 80% certainty of their participation, we were contacted on Friday afternoon at 4:30 p.m. and informed by the *Commission for Pan-African Affairs* that the Government of Barbados' Cabinet, having met the previous afternoon had unfortunately informed them that their participation in this Symposium would not be funded. This small Nation State had to deal with sending a delegation to Geneva and sustaining it for two weeks – even as I speak – to ensure a meaningful participation at that unexpected, last-minute *3<sup>rd</sup> Preparatory Conference* (Prep Com) for the *United Nations 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (WCAR).

This *3<sup>rd</sup> Prep Com* was really never meant to be. But the traditional consensus could not be neatly and expediently reached – as in the past – notably because African Descended Peoples and other Peoples of Colour were critically present and, for the first time, were able to voice our reality, perspectives, experiences, and concerns. As a direct result, pressure from former colonial powers to compromise – where indeed there should be no compromise met with steadfast refusal on many fronts. For example, debate ran from spirited to acrimonious on terms like “compensatory”, on principles such as “Reparations” and on facts of History such as the Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade being an affront to and a crime against Humanity. It was in this context that the *3<sup>rd</sup> Prep Com* was “parachuted” on Nation States and Civil Society at the last minute, mere weeks before the actual WCAR was scheduled to open in Durban, South Africa.

Being the only Nation State in this Hemisphere to have taken an ideological and political initiative to affirm African Descended



*This Symposium space is about “Agency, Autonomy and Authority vested in Black skin.” This Symposium space is about empowerment of marginalized African descendants and our comfort level.*  
– **Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**

Peoples and set up a Commission for Pan-African Affairs, Barbados had to both ensure a critical presence in Geneva, as well as ensure sending and sustaining an official Barbadian delegation to the Durban World Conference at the end of August. And so, in this context, it becomes clearer to us why this small island Nation State was not in a position to ably sponsor a third delegation to our Halifax Symposium. Even though the Commission for Pan-African Affairs is not physically present, yet Deputy Director, Dr. Ikael Tafari has sent a Communication which will be delivered as his Panel presentation on Friday.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I take the time to mention these details because they reveal and help drive home to all of us the “*material reality*” – the quality and texture – of the lives African Descended peoples, both here in Canada and elsewhere throughout the world, be they individual, group, collectivity, or Nation State.

### **Regrets from The Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### ***The Association for the Emancipation of the Pygmy Woman***

The second communication was received from Madame Adolphine Muley of the Association for the Emancipation for the Indigenous Pygmy Population (*L'Association des femmes autochtones pygmées*) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RD Congo). For weeks we had maintained constant correspondence with this organization so as to ensure the participation of two delegates to this Symposium. During the past ten days, the exchange of correspondence intensified because our Canadian officials started specifically stipulating particular commitments and undertakings on our part. We, on our part, complied. In order to procure the required visitor's visa to Canada, the hopeful delegates travelled from Congo to Kigali in Rwanda to deposit their documents and visa applications which would then be transferred to the Canadian Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya because our country does not have offices for processing those kinds of visas in every developing country on the African continent. Then, after days of fruitless waiting there in Kigali, they returned home to



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RDCongo to await the outcome. In the meantime, we were asked to again send copies of the invitations and letters of support *directly* to the Canadian authorities in Nairobi. And again, on our part, we complied. And then we received correspondence from Madame Muley informing us that despite their return air travel tickets, and despite our invitations and letters of support, our Canadian officials in their discretionary judgement, had decided that the visas should not be accorded because they did not believe that the two Congolese delegates would return home to the RDCongo after the Symposium. In other words, they were not bona fide applicants or visitors and would not be allowed into the country.

### Colombia

#### *The Black Community Process*

The third *Regret* that I will share with you originates from the Afro-Colombian Community. We had a delegation of two participants all set to come from San Basilio Colombia: one from the Black Community Process (*El Proceso de las Comunidades Negras*) and the other one from the Organization for the Displacement of Afro-Colombians. These two organizations were all prepared to honour our invitation. However, because of funding difficulties and other challenges on our end, we had to scale the delegation down to one participant. Then, at the last minute – and this is really the last minute – at the end of last week, on Saturday to be precise, we had to finally make a decision that: No, an Afro-Colombian participation would not be feasible or possible at that point.

The insurmountable hurdle placed in front of us constituted a veritable vicious circle. We were instructed by the travel agency that we had to ensure that the delegate was in possession of a travel visa before purchasing the ticket; and the Afro-Colombians informed us that Canadian authorities stipulated that they have a return ticket in hand before they could apply for a visa. And so we were caught in this “Catch-22”.

Again, I am sharing with you the details of these three narratives because they constitute important sub-texts which, along with our particular streams of consciousness, resonate with heavy meaning for African Descended Peoples; they enable our Community, wherever we may be, to contextualize and process this information in ways that are meaningful for our lives. Yesterday, NourbeSe Philip talked about the Memory that we carry and why it matters. What I have just recounted is not just a recitation of facts; not a mere recounting of some isolated incidents; not just the intricacies or eccentricities of administrative protocol, procedure and technicalities. No, there is something more; much more. A deep structure message, some deep talk is at play here that speaks to us in familiar narratives buried within our collective (un)conscious. Most of us will sense and perhaps then see the patterns; some of us may not.

Let it suffice for me to now bring closure to this prelude by conveying to you on behalf of these three particular international delegations their *Warmest Greetings* and *Best Wishes* for a *Productive* and *Successful Symposium*. Even though they are not here physically, they are here with us in spirit!

### Symposium Context

The James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies is unique, and it makes Dalhousie University unique. The Chair was conceived to be a vehicle to help bring Black scholars into the Academy. “*Established to bring Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns into the Canadian Academy*”, the Chair has a mandate that is national and its scope is international. However, the Johnston Chair’s foundation is Black-Community grounded, and its “*raison-d’être*” is Black Community upliftment.

After a cross-country national recruitment campaign in quest of a senior scholar, I was invited in 1996 by Dalhousie University to take up appointment as the first holder of the Johnston Chair.

### Genesis of the Symposium

While participating as a panelist in a 1998 conference on international human rights law at City University of New York, a conference presenter shared with conferees some news that was very hot off the press. The United Nations had just passed a resolution the previous week, resolving to convene a *Third World Conference Against Racism* in 2001. The information was so hot that details of neither venue nor date had yet been determined.

Such was the spark needed to ignite another facet of my vision for the Johnston Chair, and fire the fuel of my creativity. I immediately set about dreaming and imagining. I know there are people who say that you are not supposed to dream, but you know, Ladies and Gentlemen, things do not happen unless we dare to dream. I dreamed of convening an international gathering in this “*cradle of Canada’s Indigenous Community*” with its strong ancestral memories, tying it to the land. I imagined harnessing the momentum, the energy, and the authority of the *World Conference Against Racism* to train quality world attention on, and bring legitimacy to local and national concerns around racism and racial discrimination in Canada.

I imagined creating a compelling court of public opinion wherein “*Voices of Authenticity*” could be heard without interference or filtering; wherein the narratives of Victims-Survivors of racism who were African Nova Scotian, who were African-Canadian, were African Descendants, would be the principal “*voice-overs*”. I imagined opening up a window on the international scene revealing a new vantage point from which African Descended Peoples could come together and strategize globally for collective upliftment. I also imagined firing up and motivating a community of interest, of like-minded and committed indi-

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viduals, who, sharing that vision, would work together to actualize those dreams and make today a reality.

Between the 1998 announcement and the year 2000, many, many one-on-one meetings were held to cull the critical reactions of the local community. These culminated in a first exploratory meeting of local community members held on June 13<sup>th</sup> in the year 2000. The idea and possibility of the Symposium was discussed and explored. And, despite certain up-front and frankly expressed restraints and reservations about the magnitude of the undertaking, the overall response to the idea was nevertheless enthusiastic and the green light was given.

## The Symposium Concept and Process

Three realities anchored the Symposium and directly informed its title, “*Racism and the Black World Response:*”

- **Black Diaspora**
- **Black Contributions to Canadian Heritage, and**
- **International Strategizing.**

But the Symposium is much, much more than a mere gathering. More than an event, this Symposium is an integral part of an ongoing process geared to Black Community Empowerment, African-Nova Scotian Capacity-building, and Collective strategizing. The Symposium is both the culmination of a journey and the beginning of a new phase. Three preliminary lead-up activities geared to Black comfort level have preceded and paved the way for this Symposium.

In January 2001, to commemorate the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a three-hour Working Meeting of Black Community representatives from diverse constituencies was convened on Martin Luther King Day in Cornwallis Street United Baptist Church. The 60 participants registered well surpassed the initial 40 anticipated. The purpose of the working meeting was to hammer out a consensus, a *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*. And that document is in your program.

The draft *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism* produced by that gathering prepared the way for the second lead-up preliminary activity which was a Town Hall Meeting held during *February Black History Month 2001* to commemorate the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s 1990 “Walk to Freedom.” This Meeting took place in East Preston, one of the oldest historic Black Communities of Nova Scotia. At this Open Dialogue on Racism, a *Declaration of Good Health and Long Life* was adopted, and the *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism* was ratified with individuals endorsing the *Statement* by affixing their signatures. We now have several hundred signatures on that *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*.

Participants at the Town Hall Meeting acknowledged the need for us to pinpoint the “*material reality*” of racism and bring into the open our day-to-day concrete experiences with racism and racial discrimination. This open dialogue on racism prepared the way for the third preliminary lead-up activity which was held on March the 21<sup>st</sup> 2001 to commemorate the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. The third lead-up activity, an Open Hearing On Racism to Invoke Memory and Confirm Voices of Experience remains—and will remain—memorable to all of us who attended. That Hearing was infused and suffused with spirituality, ceremony, symbolism, solemnity respect and safety to accommodate Black comfort level.

A Bench of Eminent Persons assisted by six Community Elders heard evidence from approximately 16 witnesses who, each in turn, testified publicly about the *material reality*, the daily concrete impact that racism had on their own lives and on their families’ lives. That Open Hearing helped to prepare the way for today’s Symposium, which like the Hearing itself, is about bringing Truth, as we African Descended people see and live it, into the open for public scrutiny.

## Symposium’s Significance

This Symposium space is about “*Agency, Autonomy and Authority vested in Black skin.*” This Symposium space is about empowerment of marginalized African descendants and our comfort level. This Symposium forum is also a space very heavily invested with collective cultural memory, the culture of survival. For, you see, the habit of survival has dictated that to make it through each day successfully, for the most part, we, peoples of African descent, must often banish to the far corners of our mind, and bury in the recesses of our consciousness, the multitude and daily relentless onslaught of micro-aggressions and macro-assaults that spirit-murder us as individuals as a people.

This Symposium space NOT about vengefulness. This space is meant to be a comfort zone of safety geared towards collective Recovery, Healing, Empowerment and Reparation. This Symposium initiative constitutes a proactive step of agency to end “Race-erase.” I term it *race-erase* purposefully; and by that I mean, the erasure and/or contrived invisibility and /or obliteration of Black presence, culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns. And above all, this Symposium also represents a pro-active auditing or assessment of our collective strengths as African Descended peoples.

For example, our openness and hospitality to others, our deeply rooted sense of fairness to others, the bonds of *kinship* bred of this *skinship* that we share. Our collective sense of responsibility to Self, to Family, to Community; our abiding sense of Spirituality. Our unshakeable belief that we, too, constitute *Significant Humanity*. And our stamina for survival with dignity



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in the face of all odds.

The value of today's Symposium is incalculable. It resonates and evokes the same concerns and preoccupations that were tabled approximately 100 years ago at the 1900 Pan-African Conference convened in London, England. By Sylvester Williams. The evidence brought forth and tabled at this Symposium, as well as the findings and conclusions, will resonate, not only provincially here in Nova Scotia, not only regionally or across this country, but also hemispherically and internationally. We are making history.

### Symposium Overview

The Symposium has been crafted to allow participants space and time to connect with each other, to build bridges, to forge links. Generally, the overall format is structured so that for the next two days, the first half of the day is made up of plenary sessions composed of one keynote address, followed by a complementary plenary panel presentation. This will be followed by optional "Lunch & Lyrics", poetry readings, Or "Munch & View," screening of films. The sign-up sheets, are located at the Registration Desk. An array of workshops on diverse subjects make up the afternoon sessions. And the period from four to five both today and tomorrow, is time dedicated to Workshop Report Back, with the second half being given over to an "Open- Floor Rap".

You know, too often we go to conferences and we are forced into confines; we find ourselves fettered into making our question, comment, or reaction fit either what I, as a speaker, have said, or framing it so that it remains strictly on-topic. We wanted to break out of that particular box and we wanted to allow you participants the time to be able to share whatever comes into your mind that you might want to share. Hence, the "Open Rap" session.

The third day, composed entirely of a plenary session, anticipates

the vision and strategies and partnerships to be generated and will prepare for the way forward.

Substantively, each theme constitutes a stand-alone at the same time that it forms an integral part of the overall Symposium theme. The Pre-conference Event, framed by the theme, *Affirming the Spirit of Africville*, took place on Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup>. It addressed and was aimed at pinpointing the unfinished business of Africville dislocation, one of the outstanding African Canadian cases for redress here in Nova Scotia.

The theme at yesterday's Symposium Inaugural Event, *Acknowledging African Identity in the Diaspora*, explored *Culture and Identity and Memory*. Today's theme, *Building Global Solidarity*, will reveal the commonalities among us and will pave the way for tomorrow's theme, *Building the Case for Reparations*. Both of these themes will form the bedrock for the second to last theme which is *Building Global Strategies*. For, ultimately, racism is a global issue and it is more than time that we started strategizing internationally and globally.

A Post-conference theme, *Connecting with the Cradle*, will enable those of us still in the province—and who can afford the time—the chance to connect with historic African-Nova Scotian Communities. Notices in your conference bag provide details about other ancillary programs such as tomorrow evening's poetry event, sponsored by *Word iz Bond* at the High Life Café. Again, we warmly welcome you and we look forward to a productive and nurturing time together over the next few days.

**Let us each listen to and learn from, even as we move closer towards working with each other!**

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## INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN DIASPORIC OVERVIEW

**Michelle Williams**

Lawyer, Researcher and Policy Analyst

I really can't express how honoured I am to be here today to speak with you at this historic symposium. While I have lived in Toronto and New York, I was born and raised in Nova Scotia and this will always be my home. And I struggled with what to say because I am acutely aware that I stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before me. Heroes and sheroes like Reverend Skeir and Dr. Carrie Best who remain with us in spirit.

Also, it is because of the efforts of many of you here today that my generation was able to access higher education in increasing numbers. And I thank you for that.

I was asked to provide an overview of the African Diaspora touching upon the global experiences of African peoples, the United Nation's response to racism, and where we stand now with less than three weeks before the Third United Nations World Conference Against Racism. That's a tall order. Especially, because it is always important to link the global situation with what is happening locally. Therefore, I propose to generally address three main topics.

First, the history of the African Diaspora and the global persistence of white supremacy. Second the international and national human rights regimes. And third, strategies for healing and for action.

### **African Diaspora and White Supremacy**

First the African Diaspora and the global persistence of white supremacy. In the beginning, Africa was whole. Pre-Colonial Africa boasted thriving economies, vast civilizations, unmatched progress in science, psychology, philosophy and arts. Indeed, it is one of the greatest harms of slavery that this rich history and ancestry was wrenched from our conscious awareness. As Randall Robinson says, "We need to recover the story of ourselves for the survival of our soul."

Europeans viciously invaded Africa and committed the most extreme human rights violations in world history. They committed murders, wanton destruction, plunder and theft, and ended the enjoyment of our advance culture and civilization. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism were genocidal crimes against humanity. And Europeans tried to justify their centuries of barbarous behaviour by constructing white supremacist ideology.

Charles Mills has described white supremacy as:



*It is our time to heal and to demand reparations and our full and rightful place in the world in order to make ourselves whole again.*  
– Michelle Williams

"... a concept that encompasses de facto and de jure white privilege, and refers more broadly to the European domination of the planet that has left us with the racialized distributions of economic political and cultural power that we have today."

So as you probably know, I am not talking about white supremacy as in the Ku Klux Klan or skinheads – although, that's an extreme manifestation – but at its base I am talking about greed and a gross lack of humanity that has exploited the labour, bodies, land and other resources of people of colour and indigenous peoples. And it's fuelled by this notion of white as superior.

And I should say also, one of the scariest manifestations is that the powerful write history as if they should be honoured. But as NourbeSe Phillip mentioned last night and reminded us, history and collective memory are not necessarily the same thing; and we have to recover our own pasts for ourselves.

The European invasion and plunder of African civilizations resulted in the forced migration of African peoples throughout every corner of the world, literally ripping us from our homes, our families and our traditions. As a result, African peoples all over the world experience a similar type of oppression including State-sanctioned enslavement followed by State-sanctioned labour exploitation. Power resources and opportunity were meted out on the basis of race. And this racialized hierarchy of power was violently enforced by private militias and public law enforcement. Where African peoples established communities, often in response to forced segregation, they were always at risk of further displacement and



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land loss at the whim of white interests.

And recently in a conference in Toronto, we heard from a representative of 53,000 Afro-Hondurans who are currently dealing with land-loss issues. And I didn't even know that we were there in those numbers. So it really happened everywhere. And as you know, African-Canadian Communities share these experiences with Africans throughout the Diaspora.

As you know, slavery existed in Canada for over 200 years, followed by segregation and systemic racism in employment, housing, education, health, social services and so on – so prevalent, as to be invisible, to become synonymous with the norm. Lands that were promised to Africans were either never given, or, Blacks were given land that was rocky and difficult to farm, while Whites were given the most favourable tracts of land. And we must note, first and foremost, that that land was not really even theirs to give. I mean it is that of the First Nations People.

Also, formal and informal immigration laws prevented Blacks from coming to Canada while giving Europeans incentives to settle here. And Black labour built a large part of Canada, including Citadel Hill, here in Halifax. And yet, we have not participated in the wealth that we generated, while British, French and other European Canadians, including Nova Scotians, profited from British Commonwealth slavery.

There has never been an apology for the African Holocaust. No reparations have yet been made to people of African descent. In fact, the only reparations that have been made were made to White slave owners. And if the problem has never been corrected, why would we think that it has gone away today? The chain of racism, White privilege, bigotry, and prejudice has never been broken. Instead, slavery has morphed into contemporary forms of global anti-Black racism or anti-African racism, however you call it. The same racist ideology that stereotypes Blacks as threatening and violent in order to justify the slave owners' harsh treatment of us, is used to justify police abuses against Black people today.

The prison industrial complex is a new slavery, wherein Black men, in particular, are imprisoned at soaring rates, stripped of their right to vote, and have their labour used to profit privately owned prisons. And if you think this isn't happening in Canada, think again. It is.

We are under constant surveillance in our cars, by child welfare authorities, and as we cross the borders. And I can tell you right now, I have travelled from New York into Canada

three times since the beginning of July and I have had my bags checked for drugs every single time. That is an outgrowth of the perversity of slavery and colonialism, when Whites felt they had the right to monitor, control and even abuse our bodies.

Environmental racism and land loss is linked to past segregation and is decimating Black Communities throughout the world. From oil exploration in Nigeria and the Sudan to the siting of hazards in and around African Nova Scotian Communities, to the eradication of whole communities like Africville, race discrimination continues to infest employment, education, health care and social service systems. In addition, millions of African peoples are dying of AIDS all over the world while drug companies withhold medicine and yet rush to patent indigenous plants and knowledge.

Industrialized countries, I should note, own 97 percent of all the patents world-wide. And make no mistake, the new imperialism is economic globalization. A smaller number of people control an increasing amount of the world's wealth, and the gap between rich and poor world-wide is increasing. According to a 1999 UN Report – a fifth of the world's people living in the highest income countries has: 86% of the world's domestic product, 82% of the world's export markets, 68% of foreign direct investment, and 74% of world telephone lines. The bottom fifth, the poorest countries – and you know who they are – has about 1% percent of each of these sectors. And the gap is widening.

And if you think it is not going on in Nova Scotia, a recent study done by the non-profit research group, GPI Atlantic, shows that 80 percent of Nova Scotians are worse off than they were 20 years ago. And the income gap between rich and poor is wider than at any time since 1980. But we probably already know that because we are working longer and seeing less for it, most of us.

Institutions like the World Bank, IMF and Multi-Nationals are controlled by the very countries who grew rich from exploiting Africa. Western countries now loan back money to the very countries they under-developed in the first place imposing exploitive and restrictive terms, and forcing developing countries to spend their money on debt servicing and other pro-western initiatives, rather than providing education, health care and other basic services to their own people.

And I just have to stop and say that this is like, this is just really unbelievable to me. Let me just break it down a little bit. It's like me coming into your home, stealing your children and forcing them to work for me for free. I abuse them, and worst

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of all, I force them to forget you and to hate you and blame themselves for their condition. In the meantime, I also steal your belongings and your land, your most sacred family treasures. And when you finally manage to kick me out of your house and gain your independence, I force you to pay me in order for you to start rebuilding your life and your home.

This greed and dehumanization has got to stop. And the global focus on reparations enables us to embrace the truth about who we are, our work, and what is owed to us. And to set our agenda for recovery, healing and wholeness.

And it is also important for those who are still willing to exploit people of African descent to recover their humanity.

## International and National Human Rights Regimes

I now turn to the international and national human rights regimes and the response to slavery, colonialism, and anti-Black racism that I have just talked about. So what has been the response of the International Regime to Slavery which has been called a human rights crime without parallel in the modern world. Well, after centuries of no response, the United Nations was formed as a result of the crimes committed by Nazi Germany. Indeed one of the guiding principles of the UN, created in 1945, is the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of race.

I will now sketch a brief history of the international human rights apparatus designed to address race discrimination. In 1963, the UN General Assembly adopted the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, and a legally binding treaty followed in 1965. That treaty, called the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Race Discrimination*, is monitored by a treaty committee and is the primary anti-racist legal instrument at the international level. So this is the "Race Convention," as it's called. Or you might have heard it called "CERD." It has been ratified by 155 countries, including Canada; although, Canada has not implemented the treaty here at home, which I will address later.

The year 1968 brought the *First International Conference on Human Rights*, and 1971 was designated the *First International Year for Action to Combat Racism*. Clearly, one year was not enough; so in 1973 the *First Decade for Action to Combat Racism* was proclaimed. One decade gave rise to another, and another, and we are now nearing the end of the *Third Decade for Action to Combat Racism*. Now, I did not know all of this until relatively recently. And, another fact unknown to me, throughout this time there were also two other world conferences to address global racism in 1978 and in 1983, both of which were held in Geneva. Most people, including myself,

were not there. Most African peoples were not there.

In addition to these conference initiatives, in 1993, the UN appointed a *Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism*, and there was also a *UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities*. Now you may be asking why White supremacy and anti-Black racism are still such strong forces in shaping the quality of life of African peoples after three decades, two conferences, a sub-commission on minorities, a *Special Rapporteur*, a race convention, and related treaties. Well, of course, part of the reason is that the crimes of slavery in colonialism have never been fully acknowledged or repaired – which is why we are now earnestly focussing on reparations. It is also because the International Human Rights Regime, despite its laudable goals, is also part of the global power structure.

Ultimately, the world's nations comprise the UN General Assembly and there are, of course, hierarchies of power among nations largely created and sustained by slavery, colonialism and now economic globalization.

It was only in the 1960s when African peoples were breaking the chains of colonialism all over the world, in Africa, the Caribbean, the parallel civil rights movements here in North America, that newly independent countries demanded their rightful places at the UN. Also, until recently, non-governmental organizations or (NGOs as they are called in the lingo), representing people of African descent have not been involved in the International Human Rights Regime. So how can human rights work if the victims are not at the table? How can they even know what the problem is if we are not there?

Another and related reason that the UN System has failed to eradicate anti-Black racism is that the UN continues to operate under a model that looks for overt bright light glaring discrimination. This was fine when it came to addressing issues like apartheid, but we are now in a time, as you know, where contemporary racism is largely institutionalized, systemic and covert.

Now I am going to move briefly into a sub-category that has concerned during my years of trying to litigate race cases in Canada. And I know that African-Canadians are experts on this type of covert racism, because Canada is a world leader in denial and hypocrisy when it comes to its own racism. The myth of Canada's racial tolerance, its pride in being the last stop on the *Underground Railroad*, and its global image as a racism-free zone, are maintained by making invisible, the relationships between African-Canadians and White privilege. Simultaneously, this dynamic is enforced through a pat-



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tern of denial that racism even exists, a reality that permeates all Canadian institutions, including, and especially, the legal system.

Allow me to just digress for a minute to give you a brief and recently familiar example of this. You know the latest debacle with Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman – and he has been involved in a lot of them – where he used Toronto's multi-cultural diversity to bolster the City's Olympic bid, and then, as you know, turned around and stated that he was afraid of going to Mombassa, Kenya, because he was afraid of being boiled in a pot by Africans while they danced around. That is, to me, a typical example of how Canada says, it is racism-free, and then turns around and treats us like they do at home. Canada has done a good job of creating legal mechanisms for legal redress of racial discrimination, but not for enforcing them. We have a Charter. We have Federal and Provincial Human Rights Codes and Commissions, and even a Multi-Culturalism Act and a Federal Employment Equity Act. Moreover, Canada has ratified the six major International Human Rights Treaties, including the Race Convention; although the treaties have not been domestically implemented. This means essentially that Canada condones racism at home while it touts itself as a leader of human rights around the world.

Or, as Ida Graves stated in her 1930 book entitled, **The Negro in Canada**, “the Negro has exactly the same rights as anybody else until he tries to use them”. But I do think that African-Canadians can bring that Canadian hypocrisy to light on the world stage and force concrete changes at home. And to me that is one of the promises of being in the international arena.

Canada has portrayed itself as a model of racial tolerance for the rest of the world and now it must live up to its rhetoric. We have to force them to have to live up to that rhetoric.

So where are we now three weeks away from the *Third UN World Conference Against Racism*? Well, this time, they say that one of the objectives of the conference is to formulate concrete recommendations and further action-oriented national, regional and international measures aimed at combatting all forms of racism. So action and concrete measures are supposedly on the agenda. But for some reason, reparations for people of African descent is a strong point of contention for western countries. Surprise, surprise!

So far, this Third World Conference has been woefully underfunded and understaffed compared to other conferences, like for example, the Beijing Conference for Women. It has been plagued by the undue influence of Western countries –

including Canada and the US – who have undermined the conference and resisted any meaningful discussion on reparations and other concerns of African peoples. And allow me to give you two quick examples. I went to the first Prep Com in Geneva last May. I was meeting with a member of the Canadian Government delegation. We were talking about slavery. I was saying, “*What’s going on? Where is anti-Black racism?*”. The member of the Canadian Government delegation responded to me with: “*Well, technically, slavery didn’t exist in Canada because Canada wasn’t an independent country as we know it now at the time.*” Ladies and Gentlemen, this is what we are dealing with.

Second example, at the Regional Prep Com for the Americas in Chile, which was last December, Canada and the US were the only countries to take issue with the African peoples’ claims for self-determination and reparations. And if you look at the document that came out of that, they actually have listed their reservations, (as they are called in legalese) at the end of that document.

So another barrier to what’s happening now at the World Conference is that multi-national companies are also interfering with the UN process through pressure and influence on politicians at home and abroad. In short, the same sort of tactics, including stall tactics, used locally and nationally to frustrate the interest and work of African peoples are also used by States when negotiating the World Conference’s platform for action.

In light of the current situation, I think that the conference will be a success if, first, we get international acknowledgement that slavery was a crime against humanity; and it is almost unbelievable that we have to prepare and negotiate and strategize to get that declaration. But also, if we are able to at least have proclaimed the right to reparations in principle. If those two things happen, then I think it will be a success on our part.

And I do not think we should be discouraged, because already the Conference preparation has brought together NGOs and African peoples from throughout the Diaspora. And the most important outcome will be the work that is done before – like this work – **during**, and **after** Durban, in developing a Pan-African coalition to pursue reparations. We need to remember and draw upon the movements of the 1960’s for African Unity; and reparations is a way of learning about and reclaiming our history and the commonalities of our current experience.

An African-Canadian dialogue on reparations linked to the

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Pan-African movement will help us to recover more than money. It will help us to heal ourselves and our communities and connect with our brothers and sisters world-wide. But unity won't happen unless we make it happen. I must see myself as part of what happened in Lucasville and Upper Hammonds Plains and Preston and Beechville, and defend against the attacks on people like Rocky Jones and Judge Sparks. And we must see ourselves as harmed by the murdering of the Black youth that is taking place in Toronto right now; and as part of what is happening in Rwanda and the Sudan and to Afro-Brazilians and to all our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are dying of AIDS while drug companies increase their profits.

## Strategies for Healing and Action

So I now turn to a few strategies for healing and action and I have singled out five main ones.

First, we need to manifest unapologetic love for ourselves, our people and begin the healing process. Healing starts within. We are spiritual, creative, industrious, joyful and loving people who are at our best when we look out for and look after each other and others around us.

Second, in order to fully heal, we must learn the truth about ourselves and each other – not the lies we are fed by the media, and even our by education system. We must continue to tell, write, sing, film, document and record our experience. Whereas, Ms. Phillips said last night, “We have to make memory matter,” this includes demanding that our experiences, opinions and perspectives be officially included in Canadian institutions – not just in February, and not just as subjects that are studied or consulted by White people.

Research writing and creative expression should be financially supported and disaggregated. And this – this is a pet peeve of mine, I just have to get this out here. As a lawyer, policy analyst, researcher, whatever, I am really tired of Government policy that lumps all visible – visible minorities is another issue – but visible minorities together instead of breaking down that category to look at what happens to African-Canadians.

Imagine the difficulty when you are trying to find evidence for cases or you are trying to document something. The latest study I read was on what happens to foreign visible minorities when they come to Canada, what does that mean? Where are the Black people in there?

And I think we really have to press that point home.

Government policy-makers must not just look at gender, but must look at race and must look at the intersection of race and gender when they are developing policy. One important point, for those who are perhaps willing to take that issue up after today, is that the International Race Convention actually requires governments to disaggregate their data and to keep disaggregated data. So just to let you know about that.

My third point is that we must define our own needs and our own destiny. This takes time and we should not be restricted by what others tell us is possible. Only we can determine what our limits are as African peoples. And I submit that we have none, that anything is possible.

Or as R. Kelly and Ulanda Adams sing, *if you can see it, you can do it*. And just do not let other people blur your vision.

I would like to share a personal example with you about “seeing it and doing it.” A couple of years ago while working with the ACLC, we became interested in using International Human Rights as part of our litigation and policy work after attending an AAC Conference in Virginia. We were not experts – we still aren't experts. We taught ourselves. I personally interviewed every Canadian advocate that I could find who was reputed to have used the UN System. Less than a year later in March 2000, we organized the first Canadian Preparatory Conference for the World Conference Against Racism before the Canadian Government had even set up their National Secretariat. African-Canadians were not on the Government's list of invitees to its first meetings. But we forged ahead anyway, demanded our rightful place at the table, and formed the African Coalition Against Racism. This was the first such conference since the 1960s. As a result, brothers and sisters from across Canada and the world are now learning much more about each other's experiences and working and planning together.

And African-Canadians have taken a leadership role in the World Conference preparations themselves. I say this, not to highlight any one organization, but to really make the point that anything is possible. And there are no limits on what we want to do.

That being said, and this is my fourth point. We do have to take the time to carefully plan, strategize and work toward our goals in a way that puts community first. Building for and with our children. And I must also say that that means holding our own accountable when necessary. We have to be very careful not to fall into the age-old “divide and conquer trap” that continues to be used to pit individuals and communities



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one against the other.

Fifth, we must demand our rights and our rightful place in Nova Scotia, Canada and the World. This means as decision-makers. Not being consulted after the fact, or having terms dictated to us. We have the right and duty to set those terms, especially when our interests are at stake.

If a corporation or government wants to build something or take land away from your community, it is your decision to say yes or no, not theirs. And we must support our people when they do stand up.

## **Recommendation**

African peoples generated the wealth that sustains the world today. Reparations is a morale and a legal responsibility. For its part the Federal and Provincial Government should, as a first step, fund a National Commission on African-Canadian Reparation that is run by African-Canadians who are chosen by African-Canadians. We have already paid for such a commission or any other initiatives that we deem are necessary for ourselves; we have already paid for all of that a million times over. It is not charity; it is our due. And I leave you with that as I turn to my conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, Durban is not the end of the road, but merely one stop along the way to reclaiming our past and shaping our own future. Each of us has a role to play in that process. Our minds, our bodies, our spirits, our families, our communities, and our peoples, have had enough of White supremacy and racism. Time is up. And a new day of Pan- Africanism is dawning— wherein African peoples throughout Nova Scotia, Canada and the global Diaspora work together to reclaim our forgotten stories, and share our collective destiny. We are a spiritual people who have always resisted oppression and made time for love and for laughter. Many did not expect us to survive. But we have, and it is time to move beyond survival to thrive. I am tired of surviving; I want to live fully. It is our time to heal and to demand reparations and our full and rightful place in the world in order to make ourselves whole again.

By being here today, you are already playing a role in this movement. And even your presence here is an act of resistance to oppression and an act of love for African peoples. Thank you for being here, and for allowing me to share this time with you.

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## AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES IN STRUGGLE

**Robert Upshaw**

Educator & First Director, African Canadian Services Division, Nova Scotia Department of Education

**W**e can never forget, or permit others to forget, that our present level of development as a people is the result of long-standing racism, exploitive practices, and the absence of justice where the rights of African-Nova Scotians are concerned.

Justice demands fairness, compensation and retribution. It is justice we demand; nothing more and nothing less. That then leaves us with some questions that have to be asked as a result of systemic racism. What has been the cost to the individual in terms of loss of income, psychological damage, emotional pain, personal humiliation and racial discrimination? What has been the cost to African Nova Scotian communities in terms of employment – in two key words, “placement” and “positioning”? I have a new term; I call it “placism” because nobody wants to hear “racism.” “Placism” is simply the end result of racism. It is the whole issue of positioning and places. Today, it becomes the ... racism we are involved in – trying to compete with.

The underdevelopment of African people based on the lack of opportunity for investment has led to the development of external attitudes, assumptions, feelings and internalized beliefs which support the notion that one race is superior to another.

Imagine! You have historical grievances with the Government since you arrived in 1783. We’re talking about the Black Loyalists who petitioned the Government for land. They waited four years longer to get land than the other Loyalists who were here. When they did get land, only one third of them got it and they got less than half the land. That was in 1783.

During the ‘70s and ‘80s, black organizations, the Church, and many individuals worked hard to make changes for the conditions that institutionalized racism had created here in Nova Scotia. While some changes were made, responses were inconsistent and un-comprehensive. And African-Nova Scotian issues were left within a sea of constant assimilation and poverty.

A social profile of the African-Canadian population done by Statistics Canada in 1991 painted a striking portrayal of a severely disadvantaged African-Nova Scotian Community in



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areas such as employment, education, income, housing, business, economic development, culture and politics. Other reports during the ‘90s qualified and quantified the conditions that African-Nova Scotians were facing in [their efforts] to compete as equals.

Four major reports were done. They were: *The Nova Scotia Advisory Group on Race Relations*. This provided the Provincial, Federal and Municipal Governments with 94 recommendations; *The Blac Report on Education* provided the Provincial Government with 46; *The Black Business Report* provided the Government with 39 in 1995; and the latest, *The Task Force on Government Services to Nova Scotia’s Black Community*, in 1996, gave the Government 45. Some 224 recommendations have been made to improve the conditions of African-Nova Scotians.

This has now become a public documentation and acknowledgement of the issues. It will require the sincere efforts of all Nova Scotia’s private sector, the Federal, Provincial, Municipal Government leaders, as well as all citizens, to eliminate institutionalized practices, and to develop strategies to redress the current conditions facing African-Nova Scotians.

Now while many Nova Scotians feel that they are working hard on changing things – and there have been improvements for African-Nova Scotians – there are still sections of the African-Nova Scotian community who suffer daily from lack of adequate services, access to appropriate services and institutionalized racism.

The last three decades have brought about a new consciousness and a clarification of the issues facing African-Nova



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Scotians. But there is much cause for concern about the neglect of, and the urgent need to address African- Nova Scotian issues. Racial realities determine how Government resources are distributed for African- Nova Scotian programmes, and the perception is that African-Nova Scotians will be able, and are expected to compete in mainstream society as equals, unequally.

Our issues have been in front of the Government since 1783, and we are only three percent of the total population. Our Government's latest response to the 45 recommendations presented in October of 1996 by the Task Force Report on Government Services to Nova Scotia's Black Community came four years later. Meanwhile the community was given three months, three months, to send the report in. The Government took four years and some months – and that's only to respond; nothing has happened.

All of this has created real doubt about the government's willingness to change the conditions of African-Nova Scotians, and really brings up the question: Are our issues being taken seriously? After all, in the four years African Nova Scotian issues were not addressed. During the same time the Government had 100 million dollars over-expenditure in the Health and Community Services Department. As well, they found a remedy to build P-3 schools for which tax payers will have to pay millions of dollars.

Could you imagine either of those two situations or that amount of resources being committed to African-Nova Scotian issues in one year? Could you imagine if tax payers were told that there was 100 million dollar over-expenditure in funding African-Nova Scotian issues? Everybody would get a free trip home!

The question that arises from this is: Does this require an inquiry into the Government's delay to resolve issues impacting African Nova Scotians? It was Dr. Pearleen Oliver who summed up the African-Nova Scotian experience in this way: We can well feel proud of the few gains, fully conscious of the fact that it's not what we've done, but what we've had to do it with. Not how little we've gained, but how much we've overcome.

In closing and conclusion, I am proud to be an African-Nova Scotian. I am proud of the contributions made by African-Nova Scotians to this country, Canada. I am confident that Nova Scotians will continue to address the effectiveness of present measures to combat oppression, exploitation, discrimination, dislocation and under-development. These efforts will allow African-Nova Scotians to set an example and continue to work with others who share in the common yolk of suffering.

Finally, I am very optimistic that African-Nova Scotians will continue to build on the 400 years of this struggle, and to build on the many partnerships that have been established with the larger communities; and we will hold individuals, institutions, businesses, and governments, both socially and legally accountable to make this one of the best places in the world to live. We will honour their memory, remembering Africville. Thank you very much.

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## ENDING THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE GLOBAL AFRICAN PRESENCE

**Runoko Rashidi**

Historian, Researcher, World Traveler and Public Lecturer

Let me begin by acknowledging our African ancestors and the traditional owners of the land, and also acknowledging all the elders in the audience. It's a tradition that many of us, in what we call the "African-Centered Movement," largely in the United States, have begun to do when we give a presentation. We always acknowledge the elders and request their permission to speak ...

I've been very fortunate the last two- and-a-half years to have done a lot of international travel ... During that period of time I've had a chance to travel to 24 countries on every continent. In fact, I've lectured in 16 countries and I've lectured on every continent, save Antarctica. And if I can find some Black people down there, I might go down there too, because I want to do the whole thing.

The thing that really strikes me is the resilience of the black communities here. ... it's amazing the resilience of these black communities in the Prestons and the various other places that I've been. It really stands out to me. Such a small population that nevertheless has managed to remain intact for such a long period of time is a remarkable testament to the strength and tenacity of African people. And I am very impressed.

I think that in antiquity – and I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about antiquity – you could say that the strength of African people, the greatness of African people in antiquity could be measured by our ability to build great buildings, pyramids, tombs, temples, various monuments. Today, perhaps our strength as a people can be measured by our ability to have survived a series of holocausts, an onslaught that a lesser group of people might have succumbed to. And I'm very proud of our ability to have survived it. But as our sister said earlier, "We have to go beyond the point of survival."

Now my brief presentation today is called "Ending the Marginalization of the Global African Presence." Now I speak, not so much of the Diaspora or even the Afrospora. I talk about a "Global African Community" that is about a billion people strong. I reject out of hand the use of the word "minority," Don't play that with me. I'm not a minority, I'm a part of the world's majority. And we have to begin to see ourselves like that. We have to begin to empower ourselves by the language that we use.

Our Black psychiatrists in San Francisco like to say that "The



*Black psychiatrists in San Francisco like to say that "The essence of power is the ability to define someone's reality and make them live according to that definition." All too often we are living according to other people's definitions of what our reality should be.*

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essence of power is the ability to define someone's reality and make them live according to that definition." And all too often we are living according to other people's definitions of what our reality should be. Definitions of beauty, for example. Definitions of what is success. And that bothers me and I get very passionate when I give these presentations.

In order to understand the global African presence, I contend that you have to look at three broad areas. Number one, that African people are the parent people of humanity. That all other people come from us. That we are the aboriginal people of the globe. This has been based on studies of palaeontology for a long time. We've all heard of the Leakeys and others, but it has been confirmed within the last 20 years in particular, based on studies of DNA, [particularly] DNA which can only be traced to the genes of African women. So all of us have an African woman who was our ancestor. There is only one race and that is the human race which had its origins in Africa. Let's begin with that. And those Africans did not remain static; we moved all over the world. So the first people in Asia, the first people in Europe, the first people in Australia, the first people in the South Pacific, even the first people in the Western Hemisphere are of African origin.

It is not enough, though, to say that you were first. It is very important to be able to talk about what you did. And so the second broad phase that we look at is the African contribution to classical civilization. By that I mean tribe cultures characterized by component parts like agricultural science, urbanization, writing systems, the use of metal weapons and tools – Africans are at the forefront of that. We look at them in the Nile Valley in Africa, but we also are able to find the evidence of the spread or movement of African people in places like



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the Tigris and Euphrates River Valley in Iraq. The people call themselves the “black-headed people.” [There is] African presence in the Indus Valley in Pakistan and India. Africans in early China. We know, for example, ...that the first historical dynasty in China is called the Ch’ing Dynasty. The people that came after the Ch’ing, the Sui described them as having black and oily skin.

If we look at Japan, we see an African presence. We have two Japanese proverbs, one of which says for a Samari, you know a Samari – “For a Samari to be brave, you must have a bit of Black blood.” Another says, “To make a good Samari, half the blood in your veins must be black.”

If you look at ancient America, it is important to say that we didn’t come over first as slaves. I get so tired of hearing that. If you look at the Aztec civilization in Mexico, you find these massive [bassalt?] heads. Some of them weigh 40 tons. One of them is so Afrofoid it was nicknamed by the archeologist who dug it up, “Joe Louis.” It has cornrows in the back and it’s not Korean hair. Cornrows in the back. That’s the phenomena we have in the United States. We have these shops in the Black Community that sell hair, and it’s not even African hair.

And then you have the enslavement process. That phase. And this is where we have the problem. Slaves didn’t come from Africa. Africans were captured in Africa and enslaved. I do not come from a race of slaves. I am not the descendent of slaves. But that’s the problem, because usually when we talk about the history of African people, we begin with the last phase and forget about Africans as the progenitors of human kind; we forget about what Africans did to develop civilization. And so we have a stigma.

A lot of us have the belief that our history began on a slave ship or on a cotton plantation or in a remote African jungle. Cotton picking does not move me. It does not inspire me to do great things. The textbook I studied in Southern California, Cal State Northridge and UCLA was “From Slavery to Freedom.” As though we had nothing before the advent of slavery; and we get caught in that small box. But even when we talk about enslavement, what I like to talk about are those Africans who fought in the face of overwhelming odds to maintain their basic humanity. Do you know, for example, that the first Republic in the Western Hemisphere was established in Brazil by Black people called Maroons today? It was established in 1698; it lasted 400

years. Do you know that in the United States there were more than 250 major slave insurrections? One of them, Gabriel Prosser’s, involved 50,000 participants.

Do you know that in the State of Florida in the United States, Black people and what we call Native Americans, First Nations people, fought a sustained war of liberation, called Semnols, for 150 years? Some of them were never defeated. Now this is what I want to hear about. I want to hear about those Africans who didn’t go to the cotton field, who didn’t shuffle, whose thing wasn’t saving the master’s house when it was ready to burn down; but the enslaved African who planned to burn the house down. That’s what I want to talk about. ...

Where are African people today? I said there are about a billion Africans? Now my perspective on Africans is different from most. ... I grew with a very simple concept, and that is ...no matter where you come from, as long as you’re a Black man, you’re an African. So a lot of times I deal with phenotype and now what I’m trying to do is make the historical, cultural, linguistic connections to Africa. So for me I’m not just talking about Black population in Africa itself, four or five hundred million people. I’m not just talking about Black people in Europe or Black people in the Americas. I’m looking at Black folks in places like Australia and India, in the South Pacific.

Last year I was in Fiji. Every year in February we have what’s called *African Heritage Month* – I came to the conclusion a few years ago that I owed myself a big trip – a research vacation after [the Black History month]. In ‘98 I went to India; in ‘99 I went to Thailand; last year I went to Fiji, and this year I went to China.

I went to Fiji for a vacation. I get invited to the University of Hawaii every year as a scholar in residence. And I like Hawaii but there’s not enough Black people to make me feel real good there. And it’s a beautiful place but I love African people, right? I love Black people. That doesn’t mean I hate anybody else, but I love Africans. My mother is an African and I’m an African. I love myself. I worship God in the image of an African, do you understand what I’m saying? I believe that until we are prepared to worship God in our own image, we will always be – we will always have a slave mentality.

So I went to Fiji. And the first taxi driver I got was Black. He says, “by the way, my name is Farroh. “ I said, “Farroh,

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where are you from?" He said, "Well, my grandfather told us that we were from South Africa. " I talked to other people. They said, "we're from Tanzania," or, "we're from Egypt." Or sometimes I would say, "Where are you from?" And they'd say, "Where do you think we're from?" And I said, "Well, you look like Africans." "We come from Africa." [It] blew my mind!

All the people over there, all the indigenous Fijians say they come from Africa. But I never read that in an anthropological book. It really emphasizes the importance of travel. Now [they] can't tell you when they came, where [specifically] they came [from], why they came. [But] then they would say, "Have you been to Africa?" And I say, "Yes." They say, "Tell us about it, we want to go." That's the first group of Black folk I've met outside of the continent who said that they were African and said it with great pride. When I was a kid, if you had called me an African, those were fighting words; we were rolling in the dirt, okay? And so it really impressed me a great deal. So you have a huge Black population in the South Pacific. I met people from Solomon Islands and ... they all say, "We come from Africa," and they say it with great pride. Some of them even say they speak an African language.

And then you have Black folk in Asia. That's really been the focus of my life's work the last 20 years or so. I have a book, "The African's Presence in Early Asia." I'm coming to the conclusion that there may be more Africans in Asia than are in Africa. Especially in India. In India you have people referred to historically as "Eastern Ethiopians." India has a Black population I would estimate at about 300 million, the largest concentration of Black people in any one country on earth. Larger than Nigeria; perhaps twice the size. That really stuns a lot of people. And I don't mean folks who are just Black; some are the blackest humans I've ever seen in my life. But people who are developing a highly evolving sense of African consciousness and identity. That's one of the issues in Durban. You have a group [in India] called the Daliths or the Black Untouchables. [They say] that the caste system that they are the victims of is equivalent to racism.

I went there for the first time in '87 and then I went back in '98. I had the trip of a lifetime. A real adventure. Got stranded once or twice; it was a thrill!

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## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AFRICAN CANADIAN LEGAL CLINIC

**Erica Lawson**

Researcher and Policy Analyst, African Canadian Legal Clinic

Thinking about this title, “Communities in Struggle, Three Decades of In/Action” was a bit of a challenge because I come from the perspective that African people have always been involved in some kind action. [This] may not be easily recognizable. But we’re a very subversive type of people. It was really an interesting exercise to think about the Clinic and the work that we do there in that kind of role and connecting it to our global activism.

So what I’m going to do very briefly is to give you an overview of the clinic to situate my talk. I’m sure a lot of you here may know about the African-Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC). For those who don’t, I’m just going to briefly contextualize it.

We are funded by Legal Aid Ontario. We began in 1994 and you will remember that Bob Rae was Premier [of Ontario] at the time. So there was a window of opportunity to really take up anti-racism work seriously. That certainly has been destroyed, I think, to a great extent under our current government in that province.

The mandate of the Clinic is to undertake test case litigation, which means that we take up those cases that have the potential to change law and to set legal precedents. In a nutshell, that’s about what we do at the Clinic.

It is also a community-based agency. So in addition to the legal component, we do a lot of public education. We have a staff of lawyers who do the legal work. We really take up anti-Black racism very seriously and that’s always at the forefront of our agenda. So you can imagine that we’re not very popular in some circles. But this is our politics; this is our mandate, and this is what we do.

We do challenge policies around education. [Other speakers] have touched on what’s happened to Black folks in the criminal justice system. [Our Clinic makes] sure that we’re on top of that, bringing those challenges forward along with a critical race perspective to the work that we do. As you know, for the reasons that were explained this morning, racism is not seen as an issue in Canada. We still have some ways to go in disseminating that on a wide scale, and that is part of our mandate also.

So just to situate myself in this process, I come to this work, that is, the struggle against racism, very much informed by



*Part of what happens in the process of globalization is systematic destruction of African communities which has been the source of our sustenance. It’s important to look at Communities in Struggle as political and social and economic sites of resistance in which we have always engaged.*

– Erica Lawson

the experience of being part of a community [that believes] that African peoples have always resisted oppression. To do this kind of work – and I don’t think I’m telling anybody in the room anything new – you have to come with a very well-informed sense of the history that we’ve heard today and a clear sense of politics.

I started off by saying that we have a very strong history of resistance and I see the Clinic as being part of that history. I point to things like the *Underground Railroad* when I talk about having that long history. I think about things like the Maroons ... the Black Panther... we have a whole host of very evident and obvious, but also hidden types of resistance in our culture. I see the Clinic, as calling to attention the ravages of White supremacy, in the daily experiences of African people. Not extreme, [like] Ku Klux Klan, burning crosses, but the organized systematic [racism] that we’re subjected to daily, the violence that are visited upon us regularly.

I think, to varying degrees, all of us who do this kind of work have to make those kinds of connections between the challenges against racial discrimination [today], and all that has happened in our collective historical memories. Let me clarify that. You can’t do this work, and this is the one point that I have to impress upon you – you can’t do this work without the kind of history and knowledge that has been described here today and really make headway. It is impossible. So for us, history is not something that’s distant, we are so intertwined with it. Everything that happens to us regularly is so connected to the past and [history is] a fluidity for me. That’s also how the Clinic thinks about the work that we do; that’s what really informs the way we approach the cases, the way that we do public education.

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What sorts of stories need to be told, and from whose perspective? What types of knowledge do we bring in? Where do we look for them? We know we can't find them in the traditional types of mainstream sources. So the immediate effects of things like slavery are real to us on a daily basis. It's really difficult for me to buy into the whole idea that we have to move on. We know that there is a push now, there's a whole movement around post-modernism where difference is good. And there's a promotion toward colour blindness and diversity and multi-culturalism that is very seductive. I'm at pains to participate in those kinds of campaigns because we've never been a homogenous type of people. So for me, the whole notion of participating in some sort of campaign around difference being good and multi-culturalism ... well, we've always been multi-cultural. We've always had differences between us – which brings me to my next point.

Part of what I was asked to focus on too is the concept of communities in struggle. When I look at what "community" has come to mean in our multi-cultural world, I think it's really devalued in a lot of ways. When we consider globalization we have to think of its connection to the devaluing of communities. Part of what happens in the process of globalization is systematic destruction of African communities which has been the source of our sustenance. There's a real reason for that [destruction], and we only have to look, well, here too, but definitely in African countries. We see that one of the ways that globalization establishes itself is to really undermine the structures that keep people whole, that keep those communities vibrant. Those are some of the first things that get targeted to make those communities and society more susceptible to external and economic profit.

So in thinking about the idea of "Communities in Struggle" I'm always reluctant to get into debates about differences in our communities, because I think [every community] is our community. "Community" in the theme "Communities in Struggles," is a site of political resistance for us. I don't know how many people here are from the Caribbean. I am from the Caribbean and I certainly know the role that communities play in sustaining [our] kinds of societies. One example that comes to mind is the Red Thread Collective in Guyana. When the IMF completely undermined the education system, the women in that community got together and said, We're going to have to find books so our kids can go to school. We have a whole number of those kinds of examples here in Nova Scotia, I'm sure; but certainly, you know, just about everywhere that African people reside.

So how does this concept of "Communities in Struggle" relate to the political agenda of the African-Canadian Legal

Clinic? In thinking about this, one of the ways that we frame the way we approach cases or public education is to bring in a community perspective. [We] consult with the African Community to ask how we should approach this or that matter. What perspective should we take? What should we be thinking about? Now I'm not saying that's a perfect system but what I am saying is that in a society that's dominated by Eurocentric approaches, that's a very unique way of doing the work because you get the voices of the people who are experiencing and living the issues involved in influencing how we take up these issues. I think that's very important.

I also think that beyond that, [our approach] offers a challenge to [an otherwise] very monolithic way of seeing the world. Our procedure ensures that you get multiple perspectives. Just as an aside, the reason why getting multiple perspectives is really important to me is that in our education system ... we don't learn our history because there is one way of looking at the world, the European way. So we never get different experiences, histories, knowledge, perspectives. So I think it's even more important to approach the work that we do from that point of view.

Therefore it's important to look at Communities in Struggle as political and social and economic sites of resistance in which we have always engaged. As I've mentioned, we see that all across the globe in the way that we live as African peoples. I would challenge anyone to tell me that that's a romantic view of community because these are ideas or these are things that I get in discussions with people and I'm told that, you know, the risk of looking at African people as a community is that you reduce us to a homogenous mass and we don't have different experiences. Well, that's not true.

We actually do have a vast array of experiences. We know that gender and sexuality and a host of other locations class and inform the way that we live in the world. So it's not about reducing these experiences to something singular, but rather to look at it as ways in which we sustain ourselves.

Just to give you an example or to situate what I'm talking about, two questions come to mind: How is the work of the African-Canadian Legal Clinic connected to the realities of our history and our present condition, which I've already said are very closely inter-related? The second question I have is how is it connected to a collective understanding of the community?

At the African-Canadian Legal Clinic the historical and current persistent reality of racism informs our legal and public education work. Our approaches are infused by a critical



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knowledge and an acute awareness of how Eurocentrism and White supremacy normalize the daily violations of our human rights and acts of violence to which we're subjected. One of the examples that come to mind is a case we argued at the ACLC in February. We intervened on behalf of a man who was strip-searched in a public place, a sandwich bar in downtown Toronto. The police had the man under surveillance and in their effort to gather evidence said that he had hidden the drugs in his buttocks.

So they proceeded to strip-search this man in a public place. Without going into any graphic details, you can only imagine how dehumanizing and degrading that experience must have been. Without belabouring the point, in arguing the case, we take the approach that you can't just look at a case like that as a singular objective; it has to be situated in the context of our historical experiences. We know that there's a long history of subjecting African bodies to these kinds of violations and humiliations. So to appear before the Supreme Court of Canada and argue that case – what we were actually asking for is that the police must get a warrant and take the person down to the police station if they have to conduct these kinds of searches.

You can not make an argument like that without contextualizing or bringing to testimony the kinds of things to which African people and African bodies have been subjected. You can't talk about a case like that without talking about lynching and rape and all the things that have happened to us because we've never had that kind of ownership over our person. I think that's very important work. I think it's the kind of work that needs to be taken up in all different fares in this society to really get at the heart of White supremacy. It's a way to make the reality of our history.

It is not about whether this man had drugs on his person. It really is about how one could think to do this to a body. What gives you that right? And so these are the ways that we think about what we do and that's one of the reasons why a lot of things that have been said here today resonate with me very deeply and very dearly, not just in terms of my own politics, but in terms of the assurance it gives me that there is a space where I can carry out this work.

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## COMMUNITIES IN STRUGGLE: LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Wendy Mayimele

Counsellor, South African High Commission, Ottawa

**B**efore I speak, I would like to pay homage to all fallen heroes in South Africa and in Africa as a continent and to all people who assisted South Africa, during their dark days, to get their freedom. I would also like to thank everybody who stood by us during that time and I'm also happy that we are able as South Africans to share our experiences with you. I know, especially with regards to the the Halifax community, that we have a lot to learn from each other and a lot to share with each other.

Also I would like to thank Professor Esmeralda whom I met when I came for the Black Business Summit. After the discussions that we had, I learnt that we were going to have a lot of synergies.

[Now], to talk about communities in struggle, I'll talk about what racism means to South Africa, what the Durban conference means to South Africa and what we think it means to all Africans in Africa and outside the continent, and what we think about what should happen in Durban and beyond ... not just Durban as a talk shop, but what we think about the monitoring of the plan of action to come out of Durban.

I will start with the South African experience: [at one point in time], a man called Jan van Riebeck from Holland stepped in the coastline of Cape Town in South Africa. That was in April 1652. That started the process by which the people in South Africa were dispossessed and disenfranchised. We changed hands between the Dutch people and later the English settlers and then back to the Dutch people who are now called the Afrikaans, because they are now in Africa.

In 1948 South Africa started internalizing its racism policies, the systematic, documented and institutionalized apartheid. In 1948 they started with the Education Act and the architect was a man called Verwoerd who later became the Prime Minister of South Africa and was assassinated in 1966. In his words, "We have to have this Black Education Act so that the Blacks are taught not to think and reason analytically but only to be subservient." And then he said, "What is the use of teaching it to learn science and mathematics?" "It" meaning the Black people.

In 1950, the *South African Racism Act* was promulgated wherein all South Africans had to pass a test; they called it the Classification Test. They had to test your race if they are not



*We have to forge solidarity as a continent and with our African brothers and sisters outside the continent, so together we can enforce and strengthen the African denizens – economic development and bringing back the dignity that we lost.*

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sure whether you're Black or White because by then we had people who were in between and they were called coloreds. Some of the people who we knew were White failed the test and were not classified as White. Some of the people who were Black, and they knew they were Black, went for the test because of the reasons I will mention later. They passed the test and some of them [became] Whites. So you had a situation where in one family you have, maybe, the first two children being White, the third one being Coloured, and the fourth and the seventh being Black. These people in one family were not supposed to talk to each other, visit each other. And you had to stay in separate environments and attend different schools.

That *Act* was later on tightened because they said there were loopholes – as I said, some [Black ] people passed the test and they were now Whites. Why did a lot of people who were Black wanted to be classified as Whites? It is because there were a lot of advantages ... because we had the act on job preservations. If you were Black you knew that the jobs that you would get are like sweeping and making tea, whether you had a Ph.D., whether you had the ability – it did not matter, because you were Black.

So people went for the test so that if they passed to become either White or Coloured they could get better employment, stay in better environments, have housing subsidies, better education. We had four types of education: you had education for Whites, for Indians, for Coloreds and for Blacks. Unlike now in South Africa when you are either Black or White. We no longer have people called Indians and coloreds.

Because amenities were also separated, later on when Whites wanted better environments, fertile soils for agriculture, bet-



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ter views for their residences, Africans had to be forcibly removed from their fertile and convenient places; they were thought to be lesser mortals. This went on and on until 1912 when Black people banded together to start the African National Congress. This was so that all the Blacks can have one mode of action to fight a common enemy ... that enemy was not a White person, but the policies of a White person.

In 1960 the struggle against apartheid and racism was internalized in South Africa. That is why during that time there were a lot of sabotage by Black political groups and that is when our stalwarts were arrested. Mandela and all the other people were later on jailed in the 60s. In 1961 the people of South Africa said enough was enough. They began to fight racism and people were slaughtered. It was another holocaust in Sharpeville.

In 1956 because of the Pass Laws, Blacks had to carry [identity] cards, they called it a “dumb pass”. “Dumb pass” in Afrikaans means a stupid identity, an identity [card] that is carried by stupid people. So we had to carry “dumb pass” all the time. Because we lived in townships and separate places – if you are from the eastern Cape, from the coast, or from Durban and you had to visit Johannesburg, you had to have your dumb pass that showed that really you are a South African and you are from the eastern Cape or you’re from Natal, and then you had to go to a magistrate in that place so that the magistrate can say something about you that you don’t even understand. And then as you are sleeping in the home of your relatives you are visiting in Johannesburg, they will come in to check the dumb passes and to count you. If your relatives are a family of seven, they were listed in ... a permit. The visitors are not on that permit. Therefore they will be searched, whether they were naked at the time or not. They would be bundled into vans, taken away and jailed, just because they were visiting people in Johannesburg when they were supposed to be in Durban.

So those were the things that people had to struggle against. because of the *Apartheid Act*, the *Bantu Education Act* , Blacks were given several names throughout. At one stage they were Blacks, they were non-Whites, they were Bantus, they were natives. I don’t even remember most of the names that they were given. But we always knew we were Black.

In 1976 students, more or less of my generation, said “Enough is enough.” We had to do three languages: we had to do our indigenous languages at school, and then do English because it was supposed to be the language of record, and

also Afrikaans because it was the language of the master. Afrikaans is a difficult language. [We were fed up] because we had to do a lot of languages we didn’t understand. At least English was bearable; Afrikaans was worse.

After 1948, they decided all science subjects had to be done in Afrikaans, the language that [we didn’t] understand. It’s like if I were to talk to you now in my own indigenous language, which is seTswana. If I start speaking in seTswana now most of you, maybe even none in this whole room would understand me. So imagine if you had to be taught science in that language that you didn’t even understand. But it tallies with what I said Verwoerd said: “What is the purpose of teaching it math and science [if] it is not going to use it?” So that is why you had to be taught in Afrikaans, the language you could not understand.

On June 16, 1976, students all over South Africa started to protest. It started in Soweto where Hector Peterson was shot and a lot of other students died that day. It was a sporadic protest all over the country. A lot of students were arrested, incarcerated, a lot died, and a lot of young people went into exile.

The struggle went on and on against the racism, against the apartheid regime until in 1984 when we started the UDF. Because all the political organizations were banned, we banded together again – all the political parties – into one party which was called the United Democratic Front, the UDF. Then in 1986 a state of emergency was declared. Conditions became tougher and tougher in the country and a lot of people went into exile. The people who remained hidden in the country and those who stayed around started COSATU, the federation of unions. Boycotts were organized to internalize the fight against racism.

So from this, what I want to point out regarding communities in struggle is that in the struggle in South Africa, people had to be together. All the people who were non-White had to be together because they were fighting one enemy. They were fighting one cause. But amidst the struggle we had a lot of White South African compatriots who were with us all the time until the 1990s: until 1990 when Mandela and all the other people were released from jail; until 1994 when we got freedom in South Africa.

All of us were in one struggle to fight apartheid. We demanded the release of all the prisoners, because these prisoners were our leaders. All the people who were outside refused to sit down to negotiate with a government, which was called



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the enemy, until everybody was out. It was a struggle against racism. Remember I said that the African National Congress started to fight against racism in 1912. Today it is 2001 and we are still fighting the same racism that we fought at that time.

[When we got freedom] we wrote a Constitution. The people in South Africa went around the world, studying more or less, all the constitutions, the so-called best constitutions of the world. Australia, and [the constitution of ] Canada was one that we looked at [closely]. We found that Canada has one of the best constitutions. It's only that South Africa has the best now. I'll tell you why South Africa has the best constitution: we were the last country in Africa to be liberated so we had to study from the mistakes of our fellow Black brothers in Africa. And then we had to study from the mistakes of all the old democracies in the world, including Canada. We realized that Canada has the best constitution but there are no monitoring mechanisms in the constitution. Now how do you monitor racism that is subtle? So we said we're not going to make that mistake. We're going to make sure that we have mechanisms in the *Constitution* that will monitor what we see in Australia, in Canada, in New Zealand and in the US.

In the monitoring mechanisms of our *Constitution* we made sure that we have institutional structures like the Human Rights Commission, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, so that people can come forward and tell us about their atrocities and apologize. [It is the same kind of thing that] we expect from the international community – that people should come forward and tell us what they did and acknowledge it and apologize and tell us what their program of action is after apologizing.

[In our *Constitution*], we have also other monitoring mechanisms like the Youth Commission, the Gender Commission. Because, like I said before, during my generation, we have more or less been struggling for liberation, political liberation. We said liberation in our lifetime and education after: because we looked at some of the professors and the doctors and whoever that we had in the country – they would write articles and they were never published; they were never validated anywhere as people who were educated. We said what is the use of being educated if you're still in shackles? So we said liberation now and we'll talk about the other things later.

Some people say the youth are the lost generation. In South Africa, we have a Youth Commission so that we can affirm our youth. We have a Gender Commission and a [commission

on the] status of women that are located in the President's office so that even the President can monitor youth and women issues. Because we consider that women issues are not only for women, but they are national issues and international issues just like racism and any other form of discrimination.

We have affirmative action or correctness, so that we can correct everything that went wrong in the past. We put it in the constitution because we still have a wide component in the country that is advantaged. Because we have attained political freedom we now have to fight new struggles because most of the economy is still in the hands of White South Africans.

Now then, this is why we say the *World Conference against Racism* is a chance. We must not miss it because if we miss it we will have missed a chance of our lifetime. We may not have a conference of this magnitude again during our lifetime. That is why we have to think now about what we must do after the recommendations that will come out of Durban.

For this reason, South Africa and Africa as a continent is not shifting about regarding reparations. We feel that all the countries that are affected should apologize and talk about the program of action which mostly [has to do with] reparation. We do understand that reparation will not be an event; it will be a process. It will have to take a long time. We're not talking about money, but we're talking about developmental projects because we were robbed, like Professor Rashidi was saying, not only of our resources but also of our time and our dignity. So we need developmental projects.

Then when we talk about discrimination and racism, we want all the countries that are affected to talk about equality and equity so that after a decade of implementing a program of action, we can say all of us are equal. We don't want conciliation without equality and equity. The United Nations should come out with a program of action that will help eradicate racism once and for all.

When we talk about equity, all of us should participate in the forums of reparation to talk about how to structure the program of action for all countries. As Africans we feel the west should not dictate what type of affirmative action or program of action to use. In countries where there are Aborigines and Visible Minorities, we think those countries should not be allowed to say that because they are unique, they have to have their own mechanisms of monitoring the program of



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action when it comes to reparation or developmental projects. From our South African experience, our view is that we fought the political struggle, we attained political freedom, but there are a lot of struggles that we think we should fight together with our fellow Africans in the diaspora.

Those of you who are following African politics would have noticed that all the African leaders met in Lusaka three weeks ago to talk about African denizens, to rekindle that African humaneness that we call “ubuntu” in South Africa – that “I am because you are; I exist because you exist; you exist because I exist as my brother or as my sister.” We’re talking about, the African Millennium Plan, because Africa is tired of having handouts. When we talk about the IMF and the World Bank, they think they are giving us handouts, whereas we should be repossessing what they took from us. Through reparations, we’re saying “give us back what you took in the past.” That is why we say as South Africans and as Africans that we are faced with new struggles.

We think we have to forge solidarity as a continent and also with our African brothers and sisters outside the continent, so that together we can enforce and strengthen the African denizens, the ideals of the African denizens which is economic development and bringing back the dignity that we lost, and also bridging the digital divide. We think it is our challenge to make sure we keep in step with the world because if we have to compete with the West, or with the US or Canada or whatever, and then if we have to talk about equality and equity, we have to have the skills that they have. This is a challenge that I think you, as the African Diaspora, has to make sure that you help [meet]. We are looking upon you to help us acquire the skills to bridge the digital divide, empower women and the youth, and also to help us to fight the biggest enemy that threatens to wipe out everybody on the African continent, the AIDS pandemic ... the AIDS pandemic [is] a new struggle that we are facing.

Also, I would like to challenge you, as the African in Diaspora, to start probing and searching and researching whenever you hear what the media is saying. The other time I was addressing politicians in Ottawa – and people when

they talk about AIDS it is like everybody from Africa has AIDS – I said in South Africa we have about 45 million people. Only 1.5 has got HIV or they are HIV/AIDS positive. Why don’t you talk about the 43 million people that are still healthy? What is it that you think you can do to the healthy people instead of talking about the 1.5 as if everybody in South Africa or everybody in Africa has AIDS.

There are a lot of misconceptions about South Africa or about Africa. I was happy to learn all the history from Professor [Rashidi] that I didn’t know before. One author ... went to Africa, came back and wrote a book saying Africans are people without heads. They’ve got mouths somewhere, you know, around the throat and all this stuff. So because people are looking for something negative all the time when they think about Africa, they took that in. And another person came and said people in Africa are savages; they are cannibals; they are always fighting each other; they are primitive. People bought into that too. But a European author came back and said, “I was in Timbuktu; I have seen a kingdom that is well-developed.” That time the West or Europe was still a bunch of savages, because according to the English dictionary, when they talk about Africa they talk about “savages”; they talk about tribes; they talk about lands and all this stuff. But that time Africa already had organized kingdoms. But a lot of people are not buying into that [but when history is backdated] to, like 1000 AD, [African] people already had organized [kingdoms] and then they were already trading with the east even before Vasco da Gama and other people discovered us, you know, according to them. But the western history does not even tell us that Vasco da Gama went to Africa because he didn’t know the way to the East. History doesn’t tell us that one Mozambiquian guide, Black guide, took Vasco da Gama and showed him the way to the East and even taught him to trade with the East.

So, we want to encourage all of us Africans that we should have a “do-it syndrome” because we can do it. We have been doing it in the past. Thank you.

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## QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

**SPEAKER** I would like some details of what African contributions to Canadian heritage were other than labour. I was just in Brazil and I was talking with somebody about the oldest, I believe, skeleton found in the Americas whom the Brazilians have named "Louisa" who is 40,000 years and who was left in a closet apparently for 15 years because they didn't want to talk about her. I wonder if you could talk – if you know about her and if you could talk about her as requiring a revision of the story of the Americas and of the African presence in the Americas?

**SPEAKER** Just in the advent of time there, in my briefcase I've got complete history for you. I'll give you two books and that will give you that. Basically we're talking about the contributions from 1604 Matthew De Costa coming here to this province, here with the French, meeting the First Nations people and the building of the Fortress of Louisbourg down at the other end of the Province in the 1600s and the settlements of the Black Loyalists and in Africville, all the settlements. But I got the history here for you in my bag and I will be glad to maybe exchange that for your book ... No, I'm just kidding about that. ... Yeah, the skeletal remains that you find in Brazil are very interesting. And previously you had found similar remains in Ecuador and also Bolivia way back in the 1920s. So it's not like the information is unknown. The only debate about the skeletal remains in Brazil, they've determined I think that they're close to 40,000 years old, but whether they are from continental Africa or they're representatives of Black people from Australia, the South Pacific.

So what amazed me more than anything is that you come out with these so-called discoveries, they hit the news, the BBC wrote about it, the Times of London, and then it's like it didn't happen. It happens all the time. Ten or 15 years ago there was a so-called discovery of what's called the [Ashongo?] bone. The Ashongo bone is the oldest known use of mathematics in the world. It's a bone found along the banks of the Ashongo River in the Congo, formerly Zaire. It could be 90,000 years old. And it's the first known use of mathematics in the world. But it hardly made a wrinkle.

I think the problem is, these ingrained notions of white supremacy are so well established that no matter what you come up with the same old story is going to be repeated, because we do not control our curriculums. So it's just a lot of work we have to do but I'm glad you raised that.

**SPEAKER** There are many interesting things that came up in the presentations, and unfortunately I have to limit

myself to one small comment and one question, which is directed at Dr. Rashide and the sister from South Africa. And it's in the spirit of communities in struggle and building global solidarity, which is the theme of today's portion of the conference.

One of the communities, I think, that we need to pay close attention to – and I'd like both of them to comment on the significance of ... the struggle going on in Cuba because it's arguable that Cuba has made the greatest contribution to dismantle institutional racism domestically within its country since the advent of the Cuban revolution in 1959. But also its contributions internationally, both in supporting, for example, the call for reparations, and in aiding the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. It's interesting to note that Nelson Mandela himself has said that the Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice unparalleled for its principle and selfless character. Indeed, many Africans acknowledge Cuba is the only foreign country to have come to Africa and left with nothing but the coffins of its sons and daughters who shed their blood in the struggles to liberate Africa.

So given the fact that US imperialism has relentlessly attempted to crush the Cuban revolution, I'd like both Dr. Rashide and the sister from South Africa to comment on the significance of the Cuban revolution and the struggle against global racism. Thank you.

**SPEAKER** I'll be brief and then I'll give it to my sister ... Cuba has quite a history of participating in anti-colonist movements. We know that they sent troops to Angola. I believe that they sent troops to Ethiopia during the so-called Cold War when they were really desperately needed.

The problem I have sometimes is that we talk about these small countries, meaning no disrespect, and we forget that we're all Africans. I hear people say, I'm a Jamaican, I'm a Trinidadian, I'm a Nigerian, I'm a Congolese, I'm African-American. White people look at us and laugh. You know, just because the cat has babies in an oven you don't call those babies biscuits. We must be looking at a global perspective. Here you go, sis.

**SPEAKER** I think I wouldn't have much to comment on regarding the participation of Cuba in anti-racism. As you have already said, the Cubans were in Angola and the time when the Cubans were in Angola, a South African regiment was also in Namibia because by that time Namibia was partially ruled by South Africa and Namibia – it was then Southwest Africa – wanted their liberation as well. South



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African soldiers were in Namibia, and Cuban soldiers were in Angola helping the Angolans. We had ANC camps in Angola at that time as well. So we were helping the Angolans and were helping [the Namibians] as well. For us the struggle to liberate Angola and Namibia was our struggle because the more we liberated the countries in the north the more we'll be liberated. That is why we fought with them.

And besides the sacrifices that Cuba made, the people in Angola [under the MPLA] and the people in Namibia [SWAPO] also were prepared to die with the Cubans. The South Africans were fighting with them and they were also prepared to die, because for us Cuba was helping [all of] us.

Cuba hasn't stopped being friends with South Africa because even now we have a shortage of doctors because of what I said about education, about funding. We were just Black South Africans in the country but we were not part of the country. So we didn't have a medical school. [Now] we have a shortage So we have a lot of Cuban expatriates in our country. They are working on contract until we can stand on our feet.

**SPEAKER** To Sister Lawson and Mr. Rashidi. I'm from Winnipeg. My colleague here came up. We are on our own. I do human resources/race relations and diversity training. My question is a very broad one concerning the youth, as well as policies, changing them within the Canadian structure.

My biggest dilemma, is having four boys who are Black Canadian boys. Every time they walk out the door of my house, they have to deal with the social structure against what I teach them at home. I'm trying to figure out what is the best way in educating them as to become not so much politically active, but living their life as proud black Canadians within our society. I believe that one of their beliefs is, because they were born here, they look at the anti-racism work that we do as against ignorance in the society rather than against the racist structure of the society. That is a battle in itself because as men, they just see themselves as men, Canadian men. Being black does not come into their consciousness. It is when they go out to the workforce that they will battle racism, you know. I am in sort of a dilemma as how to get them to understand that there are two dynamics that they're playing with and how to get them involved in helping change or educate the system.

**SPEAKER** Wow, that's a difficult question to answer because I don't know if I can offer you something that you haven't already thought about. One of the things that I lament a lot is how disconnected we are from our history and how a

lot of us have bought into the idea that this is indeed a very multicultural, equal and fair society, and if we work hard we will overcome or we will get ... the material goods. So ... one of the things that I find very instructional in developing a sense of awareness of our history is to read. You know, this is just my take on it. I'm not saying that I can offer you something that's going to focus your sons where you want them to go. But I find [reading about our history] to be a very empowering thing, like telling your children where we come from, how we're connected as a community. In Canada we need to do that, because there are so many absences around us. So I almost feel reluctant to answer the questions in any particular ways because I don't know that I can offer you anything more than that to such a complicated question.

One of the suggestions I have is that you to take them places. Talk to them, take them to forums like this, connect them with other young men who are aware, and women too. I'm reluctant to mentor young men just around other men because I think we need to see ourselves as a community of people and we all have something to offer.

**SPEAKER** I agree, that it's a complex and difficult question to answer. My experience has been a little bit different. I don't have children. I grew up in California and so it's difficult for me to talk concretely about what brothers and sisters in Canada should be about. I have to say again, though, that I was incredibly impressed by my tours to East Preston and North Preston and one of the things that stood out to me is a school that's there. It's called the Whynder school, something like that. Somebody told me it was an afrocentric school. I think that's critical. Now see, again, this may make some people pretty upset, but I believe in a race-first philosophy. I believe that charity starts at home. Other people do these things instinctively. African people, it almost has to be beaten into our heads that we have to look to ourselves for our problems. Others may be responsible for our victimization, but ultimately you have to look to yourself for your rehabilitation, your liberation and your salvation.

I think that we have a lot of educational materials. I brought a bunch of books and videotapes and what have you. So the material is there. Brothers and sisters, I believe that we can do anything we choose to do. That we have our destiny in our own hands if we choose to do it. And ultimately future generations will look back and say that there lived a great and mighty people who injected new dignity into the veins of civilization, and I think we are that people and we are that generation. Thank you.

\* \* \*

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## WORKSHOP: AFRICAN DIASPORIC REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

**Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard**

Director, Maritime School of Social Work, *Dalhousie University*

This video “Stop, Look and Listen” is intended to be a multi-media educational tool available in CD-rom and video. The video began as a project by Dr. Thomas-Bernard and her students. It is intended to be used as a tool to promote better understanding of how society is affected by the media.

The 55-minute video, shown to approximately 14 workshop participants, consisted of music, photographed visual images and clips of television shows.

The video was not shown in its entirety, as there was not enough time. It was presented in two segments with a short discussion after each.

The first segment consisted of several sequential clips under the heading, “Are We Still Being Bought and Sold?”

### Clip #1

A print advertisement for coloured eye contacts. The image was that of a Black model changing her natural brown eyes to colours such as blue and green.

A white student in the video remarks that this gave her the feeling the Black women should not be satisfied with their natural beauty.

### Clip #2

An ad for rum with an image of a Black woman in a seductive position. A Black male student in the video remarked that he felt that “his sista” were being objectified and that he felt hurt and insulted by the ad. There was background music by the Hot Boyz, Back that Thang Up

### Clip #3

A photo used in a CD advertisement was that of “gangsta” type children, all appearing to be under the age of 16. A white student in the video remarked that although the desire for material wealth can encourage a sense of drive and may raise self-esteem, there is no indication that education is of importance. The background music was by l’il Soldiers, Where the l’il Soldiers At?

### Clip #4

A clip from the popular daytime show, The Jerry Springer Show. This clip was of a Black man seated in front of three Black and white women who stood obediently behind him.

The Black man, who was dressed extravagantly, stated proudly that these three women entertained men and then give him the money they earned by performing their acts. To the side was a white man who began insulting the Black man for being a pimp and for wearing cheap clothing. The Black man boasted how expensive his jewellery was.

A Black student in the video remarked that this clip shows like it “glorify being a balla”, sex and material wealth.

### Clip #5

A photo image for print with Black women, all of whom have straight hair. Diva Hair Straighten Products. A white student in the video remarked that this advertisement gave unrealistic images to Black women. She stated “why not be happy to be nappy” and felt that this image objectified women. Background music by Lauren Hill, That Thing

### Clip #6

A television clip from an MTV Award Ceremony. A Black student remarked that Li’l Kim displaying herself in such a sexual way at the awards made her wonder if L’il Kim was searching for love rather than just attention. The student remarked how this reaffirms the myth of Black women’s sexuality. Background music for the beginning of the clip was by L’il Kim, No Matter.

As the video played the clip from the awards, L’il Kim walked on stage with the audience cheering as they stared at her revealing dress. The dress covered only one breast, while the other was covered only by a sticker over the nipple area. L’il Kim and singer Mary J. Blige talked about how proud they were to present an award to the “Divas” that came before them, referring to singer, Diana Ross.

Diana Ross enters the stage in a vibrant dress and blown-straight hair. She thanks them both, then reaches over and jokingly bounces L’il Kim’s exposed breast.

### Clip #7

A photo from a sports article. The photo is of a Black football player. A student in the video remarked that while some Black athletes are coaxed and groomed into sports run by white people many others who are not recruited are left behind in poverty. As well, Black athletes appear to get into a lot of trouble, but rarely pay the consequences because they are athletes. The background music is by Gangsta Boo, Where Dem



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Wanda Thomas Bernard...

Dollars At.

At this point, the video was paused and Dr. Wanda Thomas-Bernard encouraged discussion.

SPEAKER I have four boys. In my day, my parents didn't like the music I was listening to. But today's music, is...well kinda doesn't really support a sense of community in terms of raising children.

SPEAKER Look at the women in music videos.

SPEAKER It's ironic that music has been a strong influence in our communities from the beginning of time, and now music is a major contributor to our demise. Our music educates us that our women are "hos" and our men should work towards being the best "thug" they can be.

SPEAKER Music is a real concern with my kids. I am always trying to find ways to give them a more healthy view. The kids hold the musicians as "Gods" so I've found that when I bring in the "rappers" to talk to them and to get them to try and explain things, it often has a positive effect.

SPEAKER "The music is the way it is by design"

SPEAKER Its funny I saw (rapper) Snoop being interviewed on a set of a video or movie or something. He was there with no script, no props, and no need for a "Thug" persona. In that interview I saw him act like I hadn't before. He was normal. Not the tough, gangsta-type that he usually presents himself as. It was as if he knew that it was all an act. And that act is what sells him.

SPEAKER We need to ask ourselves why is it that this is what sells? We need to start getting our children to ask that question. Get the children to critique the music.

SPEAKER It is grounded in economics and we don't control ours, just like in the past. The corporate boards for the music industry don't reflect us. KR1 is more threatening to them than Snoop is, because Snoop is what they want us to be and he has the image they feel is easier to sell.

SPEAKER

...the CD packages have warnings on them, but it really goes back to parenting.

SPEAKER But the effect is so strong and the teens, they want to rebel.

SPEAKER We're seeing our kids having kids. Once they walk out that door, I find it difficult to monitor what they are learning. I watch my kids tight but the music part, I don't know how to control that. It's everywhere. What I have taken up doing is getting them to explain to me the lyric of the songs and let them really see what is being said.

SPEAKER Yes, the main point is to critique the music. I really enjoy hearing your feelings and ideas about music, but what do you think about sports and advertisements in the media?

SPEAKER In regards to the images they see, they really like the look. I think we can't underestimate kids; they say they like it.

SPEAKER I work on an antiracism board with all white people. They think we are trying to segregate ourselves when we try to work as a community. That is not it.

SPEAKER We wanted this video to be also used by employers to help them understand how and why we are being influenced.

SPEAKER Perception of how you look is very important in today's society.

SPEAKER Yeah, we're getting it from both sides we have to fit in; but to fit into what?

SPEAKER If you're from away, where Blacks are the majority and whites are the minority, it is very different how they see themselves. Here it is kind of like we are taught to hate ourselves, by them saying buy products that will change you. What are they saying?

SPEAKER You all need to see Bamboozled. The messages that we are looking at are affecting us greatly.

SPEAKER Who are we mimicking when we fight against each other: Black fighting against Indians? We're all fighting for scraps.

SPEAKER The next part is perceptions of how Africa is presented to us. How we see Africa.

## Clip #1

Photo for African tourism.

Remarks in the video.

It makes Africa look primitive. I see it as propaganda. It is like we're primitive, dirty, poor, and neglected.

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Background music by Cannabis, "How Come?"

## Clip #2

Photo accompanies an article about Sierra Leone. The photo is of a child who looks very poor and has no hands. Remarks from a white student in the video:

"It made me sad to see how bad it is in Africa." Background music by Four the Moment, In My Soul

## Clip #3

A photo of two Black people visiting Africa and seeing a slave trade station. They look upset. Remarks by a white student: "Most Canadians can trace their heritage but most Black people can't. They would love to, but I don't even take advantage of my ability to trace mine." Background music by Bob Marley and Chick D., Survivor

## Clip #4

Clips from an article in a newspaper. This article makes it seem that Canada does much for Africa. Remarks from a white student in the video: "What do we really do for Africa? The media gives us very little of the whole stories that makes us look like white heroes" Background music by Anthony B., Damage.

## Clip #5

A print article. Remarks of a student in video: "The public doesn't often see the contributions Africa has given the world... (referring to the Ghana Summit)." Background by Luciano, Imagine

## Clip #6

A print article. Remarks of a white student: "Out of 13 articles on the slave trade I could only find one that was well rounded. Glorifying the white African saving the poor Black African."

## Clip #7

A clip from a popular daytime television show, The Jenny Jones Show. In this clip, the show had people taking lie detector tests to see if they were racist. TV makes a joke of our problems. Are the whites heroes for talking about it? In the clip, one white guy says two of his friends make Black and Mexican jokes. The Black people in the audience retort non-intelligent comments like, "you're jealous because we have more rhythm."

## Clip #8

A print article.  
Remarks by student: "Some black people think we can buy

our way out of racism. Dianna Ross proved that wrong along with other rich black people who still face racism despite their income."

## DISCUSSION

**SPEAKER** Something that I didn't see mentioned in the video is how the media plays us against each other in terms of shades of colour. People who look like me are often not seen in the media because they don't know what to do with us. It leads people to think that Black people are only dark, but we're not all dark. The media helps encourage conflict [among us] through jealousy and misunderstanding.

**SPEAKER** I don't want to pick on one type of media. There are all forms. And the media is just one part of the problem, but the media needs to be examined because it is a part of it. We need to define who we are.

**SPEAKER** Did you discuss with the makers of the video, what forms of racism were discovered within themselves?

**SPEAKER** Yes, they did that among themselves. They said to me through written comments that I have here with me. "Thank you for helping all of us learn." "This is an educational tool, we must use this," "I hope that ordinary people begin to see what is really happening after seeing this video." "I will never look at the media the same way again." Many of them wanted to know why they didn't have this information before.

**SPEAKER** It seems that the educational system doesn't want them to be aware of this media racism.

**SPEAKER** The media makes money from keeping us in the dark.

**SPEAKER** Even the dialogue is terrible.

**SPEAKER** Consumerism. We are consumers. Education doesn't teach critical analysis skills. We have to find ways to stop it by integrating those skills ... Don't turn it off, talk about it. Expose it. Then that works on denial and when we become producers ourselves, we will change things.

**SPEAKER** The newspapers select what they want to print. A black lotto winner who was reported on ... all they talked about was how he was on welfare etc. They wouldn't have done that if he [were] white.



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SPEAKER That leads to the question of action. What responsibility do we have when we see something ...?

SPEAKER Everything comes from within. We have to acknowledge our biases. Only after that can we stand up against them. I want to hear what the young man here has thought of all this.

SPEAKER I am doing a research project. I feel left out because I'm half. I guess we should just ... together more.

SPEAKER My kids are light and they get it on all sides.

SPEAKER With the question of what do we do, I think we should hold the media accountable. I am watching how often racial profiling takes place. [We should] hold them accountable for the photos of Black guys in cuffs. Rarely white guys in cuffs.

SPEAKER Look at who the reporter is. People have biases.

SPEAKER I think this problem is huge...we need to take an initiative world-wide to stop and listen. Not just the racism, but also the violence and other things in the media. We should not trust that news is the truth. We need to learn to be more critical."

SPEAKER As a white African, we have to accept responsibility in Africa [to] have allowed an image to be created. We need to ask ourselves: Are we creating a self-fulfilling prophecy? We can't be in a closed community.

SPEAKER I think the action or actions should be local and national. With print media there are press councils. Bring it to the boards and the regulators which are in place to deal with issues like these. We often don't know about these avenues, but we need to find out about them. Then we are showing them we are loud consumers. We need to place imagery as a very important issue. So we must do critical analysis and directly engage with the high ranked people in the media. They need to hear the messages.

SPEAKER We need to represent ourselves better. When we represent ourselves more positively and take responsibility,

then we will not have conflicting images. We will present ourselves in a positive and proud light. Then we will prove them wrong through our actions. Education can only go so far. We should monitor ourselves with our music.

SPEAKER We need to monitor ourselves

SPEAKER That happens, but maybe not systematically and also we need to work on it on both sides.

SPEAKER There is a confidence that comes with knowledge.

SPEAKER There is a need for healing. We have a responsibility to our young people. We have to help our youth teach each other. And what success means. It doesn't matter how much money you have. When racism hits, it hits hard.

SPEAKER I went on a tour of your communities here in Nova Scotia. In Winnipeg there are income-gated communities. We don't have Black communities in Winnipeg. The community has a level of strength.

SPEAKER Community is not necessarily geographical.

SPEAKER We are not using technology the way we should and could be. We can create a community through technology.

SPEAKER Well, that is good, but then we have class divisions. How do we avoid that?

SPEAKER We have been buying what we have been given for so long that even when we have the opportunity to change we often stay the same. Sometimes, I feel like we're beating our heads against the wall. We are too busy with our lives to work collectively.

At this point, the workshop was several minutes past the closing time. Although the discussion could have continued for hours, it was wrapped-up. There was no collective agreement on what exactly was the problem, or what the solution was. There was however, a common agreement for the need to start examining messages the media presents to us and that there is an overwhelming need for strong critiques of what is being said, and by whom, in today's media.

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## WORKSHOP: GLOBAL AFRICAN PRESENCE

**Runoko Rashidi**

Historian, Researcher, World Traveler and Public Lecturer

This workshop emphasised the fact that Africans have a rich history that must not only be told but must also be understood by both youths and adults in our society. He pointed out that the problems of all Africans in general are problems that can be solved by Africans themselves.

The purpose of the workshop was to discount a number of wrong views held about Africans: that Africans are considered to be the blacks in Africa only; that Africans were and are useless and had no beginning except that which started during and after slavery. It then sought to emphasise the fact that we as Africans, Black people, have to be proud of ourselves as Africans, our heritage and where we come from. We also have to start re-educating ourselves on how we view our heritage and the misinterpretations of the existence of Africans and black people as a whole.

In doing the above, the workshop looked generally at the Global African Presence, i.e., the existence of the black people before western discoveries and slavery: On this, Runoko pointed out that Africans are the parent of humanity. Findings have shown that the first human being on earth was an African female known as Denki whose skeleton European anthropologists discovered in 1974. The skeleton of Denki is said to be more than 3.4 million years old. Other than Denki, the skeleton of a black man was discovered in South Africa. This man is said to be centuries old. In June 2001 another skeleton was found. Its DNA proved that it is that of a black person, about 4 million years old. Also important are the skeletal remains found on the banks of the Ishango river in Brazil in 1970, the Ishango bones. These discoveries not only prove that Africans had a life before slavery. They had also lived, discovered, and developed poetry, literature, mathematics, science, medicine, architecture, etc.

### Slide Presentations

During the slide presentation, the existence of blacks all over the world was shown. The pictures shown were taken in the early centuries of human existence. They highlighted the activities, achievements and contribution of blacks to human development, which today have been misrepresented and misinterpreted. African history is taught to dishonor the contributions of blacks to humanity. For instance, Egypt which is a country in Africa and considered the birth place of all black

people, is disconnected from the history of black achievements, contribution and civilisation because of its degree of scientific, technological and literary success. The ancient word for Egypt was *Kemit*, from which came the word *chemistry*. Some of the slides showed Egypt's contributions to civilisation. Indeed, Egypt is known as the mother of civilisation. They showed pictures of the pyramids which were designed with great intelligence and scientific imagination, and built with the most beautiful pieces of materials by a man who was worshiped in Egypt after his death. He was known as Imoten, a black man, a poet, a medicine man, and an architect. He was considered the father of Egyptian medicine. Up till today, Imoten is honoured by the people of Egypt by spilling a few drops of ink in recognition of his life on earth and his great works for Egyptian civilisation and for the world as a whole. Before the Greeks, Romans and the first dynasty in China, Imoten designed the step pyramid which is considered the first form of modern architecture. About 100 pyramids were built in Egypt during the fourth dynasty. Altogether, there were about 30 dynasties in Egypt. Out of these, 24 were African dynasties.

Among other architectural developments in Egypt, there is the design of the human arts depicting the cultures and traditions of the Egyptian people. For example the art of the great Sphinx that was considered to have the head of a king and the body of a lion. The slide showed a missing nose and some bombed out parts from the face. The fragments from the destruction of the great art piece are said to be in the basement of the British Museum to date.

### Women in Ancient Africa

Considering the fact that the African woman is said to be the mother of the world, in ancient Africa women were highly regarded. African society was matriarchal. Women commanded armies, leading thousands of people to war. They were governors of very prominent and important cities. For instance, Amenirdas was the governor of Wasat a very large city. She was in charge of the Wasat army which she led against the Romans during her reign. There was also Ann Inziza an Angolan Christian queen. She was a well-respected figure and contributor to the development of Angola in ancient times. All over Africa, and other parts of the world where there are blacks, women have had and played impor-



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## Runoko Rashidi. . .

tant roles in the development of their societies and communities.

### Global Black Presence

History shows that for over 2000 years, blacks have lived in other parts of the world, even before the so-called discovery of these countries such as the Americas, Australia, etc. Blacks have lived in West Asia for thousands of years. So also in places such as south, central and east India. The largest temple in South East Asia is in Cambodia. It was built by blacks. Blacks have also lived in Indonesia, Peru, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, ancient Japan and China. They have lived in southern Australia where the indigenous people known as Tasmanians have been systematically terminated by the Europeans and their lands taken from them.

Among countries where blacks are found are Russia, ancient Greece, the black knights in Germany, Papua New Guinea, Ancient Rome, Fiji, Sweden, Mexico, Panama, Canada, etc.

### Participant Response

Participants contributed generally to the question and answer sessions and gave some advice and information on the need for the youth to read about the history of Africa and to appreciate their heritage. Some of the young people responded to the advice and explained to the participants why it is difficult to ask for information. They claimed that there is no instruction about Africa and its contribution to human progress in their schools. All they receive are very negative information, especially that which is blown all over the television, schools, workplace and even by their peers.

### Conclusion

It was emphasised in conclusion that the lives of black people did not start from slavery. And the idea that blacks are unable to achieve any form of success because of their mental and physiological disability to think and do anything constructive is information taught by the slave masters. Their children perpetrate it to avoid paying for the atrocities committed by the colonial masters. The history of black people is written by the oppressors for the benefit of the latter: books such as "Gone With the Wind" have portrayed the slave master and mistress as a lover of slaves and giver of life to a useless black person. These views have been imbedded in our minds as black people, teaching us to think we are sub-human in a society that was built by blacks. It was emphasised also that before and after slavery, slavery has been used as the

weapon of destruction of the black race by the white supremacy class.

Finally, the presenter challenged all African Nova Scotians and Africans as a whole to look at the history of Africa as a pride to the black race. He noted that as black people we must realise that "until Africa is free we will never be free. It is only when Africa is free that we will be free."

### Workshop Evaluation

At the end, participants submitted evaluation forms expressing their concerns and appreciation of the workshop. Responses on the evaluation forms indicated that: the presentation was very informative and the presenter was extremely knowledgeable on the subject matter. They considered the method of delivery more than satisfactory and that they were educated "beyond words" and for life.

Majority of participants felt they received a lot of new material. They also indicated that the workshop impacted on their spirituality and the connection and it makes with home (Africa) for them. With these new insights, most of the participants indicated their transformed understanding of African history, their personal awakening as Africans, and appreciated the importance of spreading the "gospel" to help relieve other Africans from bondage. Generally participants felt it was a very empowering workshop.

What information, skills, knowledge, attitude, will you use or incorporate in the future and for what and how? To this question, majority of the participants indicated with the antiquity of the black people, and their history, they feel propelled ahead in the knowledge that they can do anything they want to by taking their destinies into their own hands.

Finally, majority of participants felt that the workshop should be transformed into seminars to enable the younger generation learn and have pride in their roots and history. Schools should have special classes to teach African history as truthfully presented by the presenter. Libraries should be equipped with materials to enable young people have access to such information. And at a personal level, while we retain pride in our being black, we should carry the torch from generation to generation by educating our children about our history.

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## WORKSHOP: WORKPLACE RACISM

**Robert Upshaw**

Educator, First Director, African Canadian Services Division,

*Nova Scotia Department of Education*

The workshop emphasised specific issues. The first is the use of language. It was pointed out that the word “racism” tends to scare people away from dialogue. However, people are more receptive when discussing “race relations.” For this reason, it is important not to lump race relations into the same category as other types of harassment. Racial discrimination is focused towards a specific group based on the systemic attitudes inherent in social organisation.

It was pointed out that there is a spectrum of people, White and Black, that are not on the same page when the issue of race-relation arises. Some people, regardless of race, feel that racism should not be discussed and that it will eventually fade out of existence. On the opposite end are those who feel that the only way to combat racism is to make it an issue.

In any case, it was emphasised that race relations are not legislated at the same level as health, safety and gender issues in the workplace. The key difference is that racism has no formal reprimand in the legal system. Most companies deal with the issue of punishment internally.

### **Organizational Assessment of Race Relations and Diversity**

The first question discussed was whether participants’ companies had official policies on race relations. Most of them confirmed that their employers have this type of policy in place. However, most of the companies and organizations have not reviewed and amended those policies to conform to the conditions set out in the Race-Relations Policy. They have bodies that regulate health and safety, but often have no body that can deal with racial issues on a regular basis.

Violation of health and safety of the workforce are enforceable by law and have a set legal recourse in the criminal code. Race relation does not. Race relations should be looked upon as a health and safety issue within the corporate structure. Once people are enlightened on race-relations, it may be dealt with in a more equitable way in the legal system.

### **Training**

As to whether all employees been properly trained, Mr.

Upshaw gave a personal analogy of his experience with Nova Scotia Power. He outlined problems, such as logistics and financial limitation that become barriers in this regard. He pointed out that the company might actually have the will to implement such a plan yet run into these barriers.

### **“Isms”**

Under this item, Mr. Upshaw stated that power, military, economic and political “isms” have all been issues at one time or another in society. Elaborating, he pointed out that power relations usually produce victims. The first victims are the perpetrators who feel that they are superior. The second are the people oppressed by the perpetrator’s superiority complex. Using the game of Monopoly as an analogy he demonstrated how power affects race-relations in the workplace.

The “Monopoly board,” called Canada, was once owned by the Native people. These people gave the European settlers the “start up money” in the form of the knowledge and aid to survive in the harsh environment. The aboriginal peoples’ land, however, began to slowly shrink to the size of a free park. At this time the French and the British were fighting the control of the whole board. In order to control the board the French and the British bring over hostages, commonly known as slaves. The Black people were given the cheapest land on the board but not allowed to “play.” Over the next 150 years, the White males in society had the ability to advance around the board. At the end of this time period, the people in control of the Monopoly Board decide to allow the oppressed minorities to play. However, these minorities did not have the luxury of “start up money.” The oppressed people had to start at the beginning and had to pay rent as they went around the board. Through this process the plantation was now turned into the ghetto. Once this power struggle is internalised through the system, it eventually works its way into the workplace.

From this analogy represented in the models used in the session, it emerged through discussion that individuals desire to deal with issues of race relations in the workplace, but do not know where to start.



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### The Tale of “O” Video

This video uses Xs and Os to simulate race-relations in the workplace. Xs represent the majority and the Os represent the visible minorities in society. In any organization Os are in the spotlight. There is more gossip about, attention upon, and scrutiny of Os. An O is always made aware of the scrutiny it is under.

An ‘O’ is under two types of pressure: How well he performs his task, as an X, under a glaring spotlight; and, he becomes the spokesperson for all the Os. This leads to an excess burden on the O. In effect, he becomes the token O.

How do Os deal with these pressures? Some become over-achievers. Others act like Xs, and others step behind an X, taking the pressure off that X and promote the X that they are behind. Os therefore tend to underachieve in many circumstances.

The presence of the O makes all the Xs suddenly realise that all Xs are not [the same] people. Xs may just feel uncomfortable with the presence of the Os, though this may be mistaken in many instances. Xs tend to talk more about Xs when Os are around to accentuate their own X-ness. This tends to isolate the Os. In such a setting, an X may accidentally make a negative comment about O-ness and attempt to apologise and therefore draw further attention to the differences between the two.

More generally, Xs stand with other Xs in the work force. Or, they may be part of an “old X’s network”. Exceptional Os often get complimented for not being like other Os. These Os come under pressure to conform to the Xs’ point of view regarding other Os. This is to make it seem like Os cannot get along with each other.

Os can become scapegoats for problems. Or they may be placed in a position with a strong safety and support network. This way, they are looked upon as less likely to deal with complex problems.

Alternatively, Xs may support a good O and place him in a position with more responsibility than they can handle. Therefore, they will be watched closely and be expected to fall. The attitude here is that Xs would not, essentially, support a bad O.

### Discussion on the Video

As to how to deal with the foregoing type of corporate culture, a number of possibilities were raised. One s to be proactive and bring unions on board.

More generally, it was put across that there are two types of racism in the workforce: overt racism which is focused towards one group, and perceived racism which consists in the perception of racist over-tones by one particular group, though it may not appear to be harmful to the instigator.

An example of “perceived racism” is used within the term “sunshine.” Sunshine can have two different meanings: a ‘bubbly’ personality, or it is a derogatory term directed towards Black people. The two parts of this type of racism are the communicator and the receiver. The communicator may not intend to be racist, or even have the knowledge that he/she has those tendencies. In any case, the impact on the victim is more important than the proven intent of the communication.

At an individual level, dealing with such a case requires educating the offender. The victim should inform the perpetrator of the harmful nature of his comments. Hopefully, this will rectify the matter and obviate the need to go farther into the race-relations process.

As to how a Black person in charge of making the final judgement on race issues can handle the perception of always coming down on the side of the victim, the general conclusion was that there is a need to ensure that the decision making process is clear.

As to the problem of management claiming that a particular incident might be an isolated one, it was concluded that management has to be educated on race-relations. The problem may be one of ignorance and not necessarily malice.

Overall, some of the themes that ran through the discussion were that for dealing with workplace race relation issues, first, there is the need for more knowledge on the part of management and workers on the subject. Second, a formal process of dealing with the issues at stake must be put in place. Third, victims have to be supported. Finally, the best way to deal with race relations is for each one to be proactive about it.

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## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

**Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**

Professor of Law

James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, *Dalhousie University*

**Y**esterday we pooled perspectives and experiences in an effort to build Global Solidarity and we found many commonalities. Today's theme asks us to examine the *Case for Reparations*. For, we African Descended Peoples are **in need of repair**, starting with our History. Traditional history would have us all accept and believe that, before and after Columbus, Black People are still, in the words of Ivan Van Sertima, empty-handed "beggars in the wilderness of History".

And yet, we Peoples of African Descent know that our history here in these three Americas, as well as elsewhere, did NOT only begin with the slave castles of Cape Coast, Elmina, and the Islands of St. James and Gorée. For, we move in the power of a Mighty Past. There are *streams of consciousness* that, as NourbeSe Phillip has already informed us, make "*Memory matter*."

For, as Iyanla Vanzant so poetically puts it, in our African Descended Family Line, resides the genius of those who were born into a barren land and built the pyramids. In the oasis of our mind is the consciousness of those who charted the stars, kept time by the sun, and planted by the moon. In the centre of our being is the strength of those who sowed the crops, toiled the fields, and banqueted on what others discarded. In the light of our heart is the love of those who bore the children who were sold away, only to one day hang as Strange Fruit from a tree. In the cells of our bloodstream is the Memory of those who weathered the Trans-Atlantic living hell, stood on the auction blocks, found their way through the forests, and took their case to the highest Courts of these three Americas.

Black men and women were brought to this Hemisphere in chains to serve an economy which needed our labour. And, even when slavery was declared over – on paper – there was still a need for us in the *world economy* as cheap labour. We picked the cotton, planted the tobacco and cut the cane; we dug the ditches, shined the shoes, swept the floors, and hustled the baggage; we washed and ironed the clothes, cooked the food, tended the young, injured and dying, and cleaned the toilets. We did the dirty work for these three Americas. For that was our designated and imposed "place" – the "place" where Western economy needed us to be. And, as long as we stayed in that "place", there at the bottom, we were welcomed to work and live in these three Americas... in



*Our scrupulous compilation of evidence must be so comprehensive as to go beyond the monetary – it must substantiate a claim that transcends mere monetary compensation. For African Descended Peoples are a People in need of Repair, both here in this Hemisphere and elsewhere.*  
– **Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill**

the ghettos, the *favelas*, and the *bidonvilles*, and in the isolated and alienated historic Black Communities called Birchtown, Africville, Beechville or Little Burgundy....

The physical, spiritual, and emotional murder practised against us then was both partial and selective. It was a limited genocide meant not so much to exterminate us as to warn us, to serve us notice, to correct us, to "group intimidate", terrorize and chill us. Its target was to use those of us who would not submit as examples of what could happen to the rest of us. Those who objected to being kept in their designated place at the bottom were beaten or killed for being "uppity". Those who challenged and continue to challenge our racist overlords, claiming for themselves – and for us – our rights as human beings and citizens, were burned for being insolent, publicly scourged, lynched, mutilated, and humiliated, made spectacle – all to teach the rest of us to accept and always stay in "our place". As the children of those forbears who chose to survive, we are duty-bound to carry and pass the torch. We are duty-bound to claim our inheritance, to right the wrongs, to claim just reparations.

Like that 1951 African American *Petition and Prayer for Relief* which fifty years ago charged the United States Government with Genocide and which was presented to the United Nations Organization by Paul Robeson and others, our scrupulous compilation of evidence must be so comprehensive as to go beyond the monetary – it must substantiate a claim that transcends mere monetary compensation. For African Descended Peoples are **a People in need of Repair**, both here in this Hemisphere and elsewhere.

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## THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS

**Burnley “Rocky” Jones**

Barrister and Solicitor, B. A. “Rocky” Jones and Associates

I must open my remarks by saying that, for me, the reality of the Canadian Legal System is this: that we as African people do not even have the right to name racism when we see it. We cannot, in our society, express the belief that our children have been exploited and brutalized. In the context of Nova Scotia, [when I take into account] the real details of the *Derrick-Jones* case, I can say, that we could not discuss the racism within the Halifax Police Force. [This is] a systemic problem. It is the same problem that gives rise to the discussion on Reparations. There is no difference. It is the same. And yet the state has ruled that in looking at this problem, we [must] not discuss systemic racism. That is like trying to run a race against the best sprinters in the world with your feet tied together. How can you possibly compete? What can we possibly do?

A friend of mine who has a column in a local newspaper said, “I can’t write about [the *Derrick-Jones*] case because I don’t have insurance. I can’t say anything because they could take my house. I can’t do a thing.” But this man can call me “Nigger” any time he wants. Do you think that I could possibly have a successful defamation suit because some White person calls me “Nigger” or says things to me out of my character or out of my name?

I want to read to you one of the things that [I found] off the Net [when] I plugged in “Burnley Rocky Jones” and “Anne Derrick.” [The material] is a missive from Paul Frohm, Director, Canadian Association for Free Expression. It is the reprint [of his article] of May 11th in the Halifax Herald. Here is what it says:

*Dear Free Speech Supporter, professional anti-racists have had a field day lying about and defaming those concerned about immigration or other politically incorrect issues. Until the successful Malcolm Ross and Aileen Klaus Kressler lawsuits several years ago, almost nothing had been done to halt the reputation ruining juggernaut of defamation and abuse. Now along comes another victory in the effort to try to make the professional anti-racists stick to the truth in their diatribes. A Nova Scotia free speech supporter for-*



*When we talk about Reparations, part of [our concern] must be to look honestly and very carefully at our historical experience as a people. When we say things must be repaired [because] injustice has been perpetrated [against] us, we must look at the effect [of that injustice] on us. The effect is that we have, indeed, been silenced in our own liberation struggle.*  
– Burnley “Rocky” Jones

warded us this story with his comments:

*Below is an article that can give white Canadians encouragement. A white Halifax police officer is awarded \$240,000 from a Nova Scotia jury for defamation over remarks made from professional whiners Anne Derrick ‘lesbian activist’ and Rocky Jones ‘black activist’ falsely accusing her of racism. This is one strike against minorities that you should put on your mailing list, please. This is one of the best things I’ve heard since the Kressler case.*

That is the kind of stuff that is going out internationally and it is impacting on us [negatively] since the *RDS* case. Although I take great pride in trying to advance the struggle for African peoples in the Diaspora, I have to accept that I myself have been part of one of those ugly cases that we must see as a step backwards in our whole struggle to advance.

When we talk about Reparations, part of [our concern] must be to look honestly and very carefully at our historical experience as a people. When we say things must be repaired [because] injustice has been perpetrated [against] us, we must look at the effect [of that injustice] on us. The effect is that we have, indeed, been silenced in our own liberation struggle. [In the context of the *Derrick-Jones* case, I would say] we have not collectively stepped forward to protect our own children. These three young girls stood [without support] before the

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courts and told their stories. [They] cried in my office, and cried on the stand [as they told] the world what happened to them. To my knowledge not one Black organization in this area has made one public comment protecting those children and speaking against the kind of injustice that has occurred.

Brothers and sisters, when we are not prepared to protect our own children, then we have no future. We may as well roll over and die. It is a difficult thing to publicly acknowledge that kind of destruction in our families and in our communities. But I can say that I understand, why we are prepared to allow our children to be sacrificed. This society has exploited us.

When I thought about this topic, it raised for me more questions than answers. So I thought I should share the questions [with you], and in attempting to answer some of them, we may be able to develop a strategy. I do not stand before you with the answers. I will attempt to keep my remarks as basic, as simple, and as plain as I possibly can. [I do this] recognizing the diversity of this audience – some of you have Ph.Ds and some of you are in elementary school. It is as important for our young people to understand what is going on, as it is for our intellectuals.

The first thing to consider regarding *Reparations* is what it might mean.

*Somebody [asked me], “What are you [going to talk] about?”*

*I said, “Well, I got to talk about reparations.”*

*They said, “What is that?”*

*I said, “Well, you know, it’s like this man stole something from us ... He stole our land. He stole our culture. He stole our language. He stole our very humanity in terms of how we deal with one another. And because a thief came into our house we have the right to get back what was stolen from us.”*

### What was the Crime?

So the first question I have is “What was the crime?”

The crime was all of that theft. But with the theft is the total destruction that occurred *with it* [and continues to occur *on account of it*]. A theft does not happen in isolation. The theft [I am talking about here] happened in terms of a whole international, a whole world-wide movement, and the development all over the world of white supremacy. That crime originated with what we know as slavery. So our first and foremost goal must [demand] slavery be recognized internation-

ally as a crime against humanity.

That may sound quite simple. We have all heard that 6-million Jews were exterminated. That is a crime against humanity. It is something that should never happen again. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “We cannot see our future until we have first seen our past.” Within the Jewish community there is a concentration on understanding history. There is a concentration on understanding that past experience so that it can never happen again. Therefore, we too must understand our past. Fifty million people were lost to Africa. Other estimates range even higher. Not only is it essential for us to understand that theft, but the Europeans and the descendants of those Whites who stole from us must also understand our past and the effect of that theft on us. So that is the crime. As a crime, it presents some legal problems, such as, who determines that it is a crime.

I have said before, and I hold it out to you today, that we are faced not only with a legal problem in terms of Reparations, it is also a political problem. And the political problem becomes as important as the legal problem. I hope that in the course of my remarks I will be able to deal with [some of the legal issues that the problem raises].

### When was the crime committed?

This [question] becomes a little bit more difficult because we can go back to 1619 in the United States or we could go back to 1604 in terms of the African contact with North America. But when we ask “when was the crime committed?,” we must look at this crime on the continuum and understand that the theft, which began with slavery, is still an ongoing crime. They are still stealing from us every day.

### Has the crime ended?

When you want to defend or prosecute someone for an alleged crime, you want to look at the crime in terms of time and space – Where? How? When? Why? Intent. Has the crime ended? It continues. Was there an intention on the part of the perpetrators to commit the crime? Absolutely. Absolutely. No one could argue that it was accidental.

How was this crime enforced? What power did the perpetrator of the crime have to pull [it] off? We have said that the original crime was slavery, and stealing from us – stealing our culture, stealing our language, stealing our religions. How did they do it? I have oftentimes talked about the three Ms and, as Walter Rodney wrote, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. I say that it has to do strictly with the three Ms: *Missionaries, money, and marines*. If they send in the missionaries and they



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cannot destroy your religions and your people, then they flood in money and destroy your economy. If that destruction is not absolutely complete, then it becomes just to send in the marines even if this is simply because they do not like the fact that there is an airstrip in your community.

### Who were the perpetrators of this crime?

When we look at Reparations and we discuss the criminality of the Europeans, we have to determine whom we are talking about. Is it the government that committed the crime? Is it the individual that committed the crime? Is it business that committed the crime? [The question is important] because whoever or whatever committed the crime is the subject you go after for compensation.

Now if we determine through our inquiry that it's just the government, then we just go after the government. But if we determine that the crime against African people was committed by individuals, by institutions and by government, then quite clearly when we are looking at compensation and redress, we go after all three. That is going to be very, very difficult, but in my submission, essential.

Who bears the responsibility for the crimes committed? The governments – and I am speaking strictly now in the context of the Americas – the governments sanctioned the crime.

Now I recognize that England was part of the Slave Trade. France was part of the Slave Trade. Portugal. Germany... I mean all of the European countries [were] part of the Slave Trade. My thinking is that when we look at whom we go after, we have to look at who bears the responsibility.

If you are looking at the exploitation of African people and you say that Britain is responsible, it is very difficult for me in Nova Scotia to have an action against Britain. In our respective jurisdictions, whom we go after and sue is another question. It is one of the problems that we have to address when we think about how to get Reparations because the jurisdictional issue has changed so considerably. There is a difference between, say Britain being responsible prior to 1834, and after 1834 when she abolished slavery in Britain and all of her territories. But the legacy of that slavery existed after slavery was abolished, so Britain still reaped the benefits of the slave system that she helped to set up.

### Who were the victims of the crime?

We had some discussion in Toronto about victims. I will share some of that with you who were not there. As we already know, different African people came to Canada at different times. As an example, in this area, Nova Scotia, we know that we had major groups who came [at different times]: the Loyalists came in 1783 and '84, the Maroons, and then the Refugees. After that we have the West Indian communities that are established in Sydney. In Central Canada, there are the communities that sprang up after the *Fugitive Slave Act* of 1850. [The settlement] of various groups in the west [also occurred within] different times frames.

Therefore when we are looking at *the victim*, quite clearly someone who has come to Canada and is talking about suing the Canadian Government, we have to look at a group, and at classes of people. [In terms of] classes of people we must look at Africans, and then Africans in the Diaspora. But again, we must be realistic to make certain distinctions with certain groups so [that we would have a credible or sensible] case.

Now some people have argued that [to make those distinctions] is tribalism. That the instant you begin to say, for instance, that the claim from Nova Scotia is based on the historical [experiences] of the community [beginning from] say, 1783 or '84 [you are making a tribal case]. That you are doing the same if you talk about the experiences of Montreal as an old community beginning from around the same period. We have to recognize, however, that there is an immigrant community, a different immigrant community that has come, say after the Second World War. But these are realistic considerations because, within the African-Canadian community, power has shifted from the old traditional communities to the new larger immigrant communities.

Now this is an argument. If you will remember the big conference and festival held in Nigeria – FESTAC – there was a knock-down, drag-out, across the country as to who would go. We from Nova Scotia argued that we should have a large contingent go to Nigeria for the festival. We argued that we had a community that pre-dates all the other communities, though in terms of numbers, we are now a very small community. What happened? No contingent went from Nova Scotia.

Now I will ask how many people present here in this room are being sponsored to go to South Africa for the [World Conference Against Racism?] ... There's one. There's another. Okay. Now then, the big question is what is the sponsor-



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ship? As I understand it, sponsorship for Sylvia, for instance, is [by virtue] of her work. ... Yvonne [has a] private sponsor. So here we are at this conference talking about Reparations and the message that has to go to Durban – who is going to carry our message? Who?

Now I do not raise that issue to be divisive. I do not raise that issue to play on tribalism. I do not raise that issue to draw a separation between Ontario and Nova Scotia. But I do raise that issue to show you the reality of where we sit in the Canadian politic. Do you understand?

What this means for us in terms of Reparations is that we must find a way of putting our particular story forward so that it gets carried to this world convention. We’ve got to find a way. It’s not enough that we leave Yvonne out on a limb because she’s got a private sponsor. It’s not enough that Sylvia has a private sponsor. Accountability must be in the hands of the people and if we can’t send them they’re not accountable to us. We have no message, no message going to this conference and we must let the Canadian Government know our position – that we do not accept the fact that we have again been denied the right to speak for ourselves.

This is reality – I grew up on a marsh in Truro, 10 kids in a poor family. Can someone here who is [not from Nova Scotia] possibly understand what it is like to go to the school that I went to? To face the racism that I faced on a daily basis; to know what it is like to live without ever having the [Black] role models that people who come from the [Caribbean] islands or from Africa just take for granted? We grow up without those kinds of role models, in a different environment, with a different reality, and we have got to let the world know about our experience.

So when I ask the question: Who were the victims? We are all victims. We are all victims, but we all have a different experience.

### **What is the effect or impact or loss as a result of the crime?**

The biggest thing that we lost was our ability to control our own destiny. We cannot make the kinds of decisions that are necessary to protect our own community. If you cannot protect your community, you are always at the mercy of your oppressor – and we cannot protect our communities. The [oppressors] have eradicated our land base. They have kept our young people in jail. They have denied us education opportunities. They have made it virtually impossible for our communities to develop economically.

So when we look at our losses, all of these losses which we will have, eventually, articulated, then we can go forward and say, “this is what you owe us. Not just money. You do not owe us just money. You owe us because somebody gives me these clothes; they’re not part of what I grew up with. Someone has changed the way that I see myself and the way that I wear my hair. Someone has stolen my history from me and that is what I want back. I want back the opportunity to be whole and complete. And in order for me to be whole and complete I need the opportunity to deal with my brothers and sisters in a positive way and on a strong economic footing. That is what this Man owes us and it is much deeper than just money.

### **What is the cause of action and whom do we sue?**

I don’t have the answer for that. I recognize the principle of “unjust enrichment”. That principle means someone should not get an advantage; someone should not get rich on someone else’s back because they take advantage of [that] someone; someone else should not be allowed to benefit [at another’s expense]. So that becomes part of a cause of action. But it is pretty narrow and it is pretty legal and very focused.

Although unjust enrichment is part of what we must look at when we consider the cause of action, I think we also need to be very creative in terms of how we would ever frame an action. As to the question of *whom*, whom do we sue?, I know that if somebody steals from me or someone does damage to me and I can identify them, then I can go to court and try to get my just reward. But in this case, we are talking about an action that occurred over hundreds of years. Now whom do we sue?

In the Canadian context we have three levels of government. Take as an example the *Africville* case. They can begin by suing the municipal government. But at the same time, quite clearly, the Province has a responsibility. And not only does the Province have a responsibility, the Federal Government also has a responsibility. This means that we must sue, I think – and it is a thought, not just a submission – we must sue at all levels. We must be prepared to develop a case in the legal sense that overlaps three levels of government. That is not as easy as it sounds. But this is part of the work that is ahead of us.

### **What body or bodies have jurisdiction over the crime and the perpetrator?**

This creates a real problem when you think of Reparations. As an example, if we are talking about suing the national gov-



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ernment, then it seems to me we have to go to the international arena, to the UN. [We must] make our case at the UN that Canada as a country has perpetrated a certain crime upon us as a people. If we are suing the Province, perhaps we can deal with that at the level of our own Supreme Court. So we must look at where to sue. And I think we must take this case the whole way from the local to the international. It is the only way that we will ever look at Reparations.

### What are the limitation periods?

Part of the literature that is coming out [presents] a debate [about whether] today’s European can be held responsible for what their forefathers did 200 years ago. [It is argued], “Surely to goodness, you have got to put a timeframe on this and limit when you can sue.” The answer to that is that we must make the crime contemporary. We must look at slavery and say “what did slavery do for you and how is that played out today?” So that even though slavery is the basis of the crime, the crime is continuing and *they* continue to benefit and *we* continue to lose.

We must work to frame an argument that transcends time. As long as we can say, “well, we are suing you [because] our schools do not accommodate us,” there is no limitation period because it is still happening. If we say, “you have shut us out of the economic mainstream,” there is no limitation period because it is happening today. This is how we have got to look at this issue.

### What evidence must be adduced to prove a crime was committed?

There have been panels around the world showing that different countries have committed crimes against humanity. Again, for the sake of time, I will not go into a lot of detail on this. Suffice it to say that there are precedents. There are precedents to show that a country can commit a crime against its population and be taken to the United Nations, or [be asked to] make reparations to those people. Whether it be the Jews, whether it be what Canada has done for the Japanese, there are lots of precedents. So it becomes incumbent upon us to really work that through to make our case.

### What is the remedy sought?

[This is a] very important issue. Looking at all of the stuff we are talking about – if somebody comes in and steals from you and takes what you have, and you go to court or you do anything, the big question [you will be asked] is: “Yes. Okay, we caught them. What do you want? Are you just after money?” I submit that, yes, we need money. We need an acknowledge-

ment of the past abuses that have occurred and a commitment from government to end this continuing and ongoing abuse. We need to be restored to the position in society that we would have occupied had it not been for the theft that occurred. We need money put into education, health, jobs, job training, and a variety of other social investments that will give benefit to future generations.

Part of the debate is that if we, as a generation, make this argument and we receive [monetary] compensation, what happens to future generations? We must ensure that any programming, any benefit, will accrue to future generations. It is not just for us. We speak not just for ourselves.

### Recommendation

One ... exciting concept that I got from the *human rights* stream that is having this debate, is that a Commission should be established in every jurisdiction. Like the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South Africa, it should be empowered to hear evidence regarding the crime that has been committed. [They should hear evidence of] the theft that occurred, and the impact of that theft, and these committees or commissions and the different countries, would then be able to make recommendations, or to take this issue forward to ... the United Nations. To me, that makes a lot of sense when we are talking about governments. [This is] because part of the problem we are going to run into is that if we get a determination that the crime was committed, we would then be faced with how to enforce any penalty or remedy. That becomes a very, very difficult proposition. These committees or commissions may be able to address that problem.

The other part of this is that we cannot, and should not be rushed into this deal. We cannot allow ourselves to make decisions that we have not thought out or researched well. [Otherwise], we will do a disservice not only to ourselves, but to our children and our children’s children. So I urge you, in terms of this debate on Reparations, to keep it at the debate level until we have done the research, the homework, to put this together in a way that makes sense to us.

### Can the damage that’s been done to us be repaired?

I do not know. I do not know if the African people around this world can be restored to our former greatness. I do not know if we can be restored enough, as Stokely Carmichael or Kwame Touré said, [to be able to] “*have an undying love for our people.*” I do not know if we can do that again. It is a tough question but it must be addressed. I do not know the

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answer.

In closing, I have attempted to raise some questions, and it is just an attempt. It is not, in any way, any kind of an answer. It is just some questions, [and] some possible answers. I would like to see us coming out of this symposium with some kind of a group or a body or a committee that would look at this issue. The mandate of such a group must be very narrow and specific. It must be a standing body, and it must be accountable. It must be a committee coming from our community that would look at the issue of Reparations so that we can be prepared to stand up before the International Community and make our case. It is not fair for us to expect, at this stage, that Yvonne, as an example, could go to this conference in South Africa and when the question is raised:

“Well, what about Canada? What about Nova Scotia? What is your position on Reparations?” What could she possibly say? This issue is an ongoing dynamic one. It will continue to be debated until it is resolved. We as a Community must deal with it.

So I leave that with you as a challenge. Whether it is a challenge to the [*James Robinson Johnston*] Chair, or a challenge to the committee, or a challenge to the group, that is what we have got to do or we are going to lose out again as we have [in the past]. Thank you.

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## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AS EQUITABLE REPARATIONS FOR AFRICA

**Pallo Jordon**

Senior Member of Parliament, *Government of South Africa*

**M**y remarks are going to be framed around two issues. The issue of restorative justice, which I suppose is not a legal concept, but something which derives from all the major world religions. The notion that if a wrong has been done something has to be done in return to restore wholeness to the person who has been harmed. This notion of restorative justice was, in a sense, embraced by the international community at the end of World War II, which set new benchmarks in terms of international law and also in terms of international morality.

I think we all recall that at the end of the Second World War, the leaders of the Nazi regime in Germany, including leading military personnel and judicial officers, et cetera, were all put on trial at Nuremberg for the atrocities which the Nazis had committed, both before and during the Second World War. That's an important benchmark in terms of how humanity was going to view those sorts of actions in the future. Even as things stand now, at present at the Hague, Slobadan Milosovic is on trial for crimes against humanity. Also at present at the Hague, there are quite a number of people from Rwanda who are on trial for crimes against humanity. There's also an *International War Crimes Tribunal* taking place in Arusha, Tanzania, in which a number of people from Rwanda are on trial for crimes that they have committed. All these are very important benchmarks in terms of how, internationally, we view particular types of actions today.

Now, the notion of restorative justice, I think was reinforced further by what occurred in the United States with respect to Americans of Japanese descent, who during the Second World War were quite unreasonably rounded up and detained en masse on the pretext that anyone of Japanese descent, since the United States was at war with the Empire of Japan, was suspect. And that was done purely on the basis of they being of Japanese descent.

The irony, of course, is that most Japanese Americans probably would have been very loyal to the United States, [and would have] fought on its side. But by contrast, nothing was done to German Americans who as a community were related to a belligerent nation. And of course, records after the war demonstrated that quite a number of German Americans were, in fact, sympathizers with Nazi Germany. Very amusing when you think about it.

The same thing was also done with respect to the Koreans.



*The new African initiative is ... a plan put together by the African states themselves. ... It calls on those countries, especially those that were the beneficiaries of the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of people of African descent, to act together with the African countries on a massive developmental program of the proportions of the Marshall Plan in post-war Europe.*

– Pallo Jordon

The Empire of Japan had colonized Korea after the Sino-Japanese war and used Korea as one of the bases for aggression into China and the rest of Asia. Japan was made to accept responsibility for some of the more atrocious aspects of its colonial domination of Korea. This, as we know, included taking Korean women and literally making them prostitutes for Japanese troops all over Asia, euphemistically called by the Japanese “Comfort Women.” Japan has been made to accept responsibility for that, and some restitution has been made to the Korean people for those crimes committed against them.

Recently, we've also had the instance of the German firms who used slave labour derived from Jewish families all over Europe. Also Slavic families, families of Gypsies and other people whom the Nazis for one reason or another held in contempt and used as slave labour in a number of factories owned by German corporations. Those corporations have been made to accept responsibility for that. [There is also] a recent court judgement to the effect that they should make restitution to the survivors of that [treatment of those people] and also to their descendants.

Now, in all the instances we are talking about here, the people responsible, the officials responsible, governments responsible, the corporations who benefited are easily identifiable. You could say at Nuremberg, it was General So-and-So who did A, B, C and D. It was “Official So-and-So who ordered this, that, that and the other”. You can say with respect to the slave labourer, it was this corporation, that corporation. You could say with respect to the Koreans, to the Japanese Americans, it was this official, it was this government. So it was very easy to apply the principles of restorative justice in those instances. Easily identified officials, eas-

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ily identified corporations, easily identified governments. And you can pay, in that instance, reparations directly to the individual or you can pay to the descendants of that individual.

In the case of the Jews of Europe, the principle has extended even further. To this day, Germany is still paying reparations to the State of Israel for the atrocities committed against the Jewish people by the Nazi government of Germany after 1953.

When it comes to the case of colonialism, enslaved people and also peoples who have been the victims of various forms of genocide, it becomes a little bit more difficult to apply the principles of restorative justice. Because when you speak, for example, about the instance of colonialism, if you take, for example, the First Nations here in North America and in the Caribbean, you cannot say today that it was this family and that family and that family and that family that were aggrieved. It is entire communities that were impacted upon by colonialism and by acts of genocide. When you talk also about the enslavement of peoples, it is a similar situation. You cannot say, It is this family, that family, that family. It's an entire community that is affected.

When you speak about colonialism, as well, it's the same sort of situation. And what one is struggling with, therefore, is, how do we extend these principles of restorative justice in instances like that?

In South Africa, what we have tried to do is to look at the question from another perspective. There are those in our society who would very glibly argue that, look, this is past and the past is past. Let's get on with building the future.

It's a very attractive argument to many people, especially to those who were not immediately affected or impacted upon by what we are talking about. But obviously, that would not be a satisfactory solution.

The other option would be to say, all right, let us try and identify who the victims were. Now, if you were to do that, it would take you from now I'm sure into the next millennium. Because you couldn't possibly identify who the victims. There are so many of them. And in any case, you are usually talking about entire communities. So how would you do that?

The way we have decided to approach it is that you cannot speak about reparations as usually understood. When the previous speaker, Mr. Jones, was speaking, he used the analogy

of someone committing a crime against someone. Breaking into your house, for example, and taking something out of your house. And he's caught and you know who it is. And you take him to court and then what was taken from you is returned to you.

Now, it's fairly easy to deal with a problem of that sort. However, if an entire community that has suffered not merely theft, but perhaps even total destruction, decimation where half the population, for example, is wiped out, how do you repay the damage? Obviously, it's not easy. And the law as it has evolved over time has not yet grappled with that issue.

So the approach that we have adopted is that there has to be some restitutive action taken. But it need not necessarily take the form of reparation. What we have proposed with respect to this is that the damage done has to be repaid. The issue then is, how? Our proposal with respect to this has been that continents like Africa, which have been victims of colonialism, of the slave trade, of a crime like apartheid, something needs to be done to make restitution to the continent of Africa. You're not going to be able to say, for example, that it is only a country, let's say, Angola, from which many of the slaves that were brought to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South America derived, should be the beneficiary. You're not going to be able to say, for example, it should be those of the Savanna above the Niger where many of the slaves that were brought to North America, for example, came. You're not going to be able to say it should be a country like Congo, where many of the people were enslaved and brought to parts of the Caribbean, that should be the beneficiaries.

In any case, at that time, those political entities didn't exist in the form they do today. So what we need to do is find an approach which is going to make good to the African continent as a whole the damage that was done to the continent and the African people. Now, if you do that by saying that there are 50-so many nations in Africa and there's this pot of money and we divide it by the number of African states, obviously, that doesn't make sense. Because you've got an African country like Namibia, which has just a little over a million people in population. And another one, Nigeria, which has close to a hundred million in population. So if we're going to do it that way, Nigeria would obviously lose out.

So what we are proposing is an approach which is going to make good the damage, but make good the damage for the continent as a whole, but on a much more equitable basis. On the table at present is something known as the New



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African Initiative. People here might not be familiar with it but it's an initiative which has been taken by the African continent collectively at the last Conference of the Organization of African Unity. The new African initiative is being spear-headed by the Presidents of Egypt, Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa. It's a plan which has been put together by the African states themselves. It's a program for the development of the African continent. It calls on those countries, especially those that were the beneficiaries of the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of people of African descent, to act together with the African countries on a massive developmental program of the proportions of the Marshall Plan in post-war Europe. This, we hope, will assist the continent of Africa in repairing the ravages of colonialism, slavery and apartheid, and assist the African continent and people of African descent in terms of catching up with the rest of the world.

For this program to be a success, it is going to need the support of active lobbies, especially in parts of the world such as this, United States, Canada, various parts of the Caribbean where you have governments and you have countries that were direct beneficiaries of the ravaging of Africa. This is the approach we thought, as Africans, could be examined also by people of African descent in the new world.

When Mr. Jones was speaking earlier, he referred to the variety and the diversity of sources of populations of African descent here. You have people here who were the

Loyalists who fought on the British side during the American Revolution. You have people of African descent here who are descendants of slaves who had escaped from the United States. We have recent immigrant communities from the Caribbean. Now, these people, I'm sure, all have different and differing experiences. Although here, as part of an African Canadian community, they also have other experiences as Canadians.

I think it would be very difficult, judging even from what he said, for any one of these pockets of people of African descent to say, These are our specific claims against this country. But collectively, they can speak of certain shared experiences. And it should be conceivable in terms of that shared experience to say, this is the restitutive action we would like and it must impact on the community as a whole. Otherwise, Loyalists will say, the British government owes us. We fought for them as far back as 1776. People from the Caribbean would not be able to say that.

Someone who comes from the Caribbean would be able to say something different from someone who is a descendant of an escaped slave, and so on. So we have to try and find a formula which captures the collective experience of people of African descent here in Canada.

Thank you.

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## REPARATIONS FROM A NORTH PRESTON PERSPECTIVE

**Allister Johnson**

Seventh Generation African Nova Scotia, Community Advocate

**I**t's interesting that I think internationally the precedent has already been set for restitution.

[Talking about reparations] from a North Preston perspective does not mean that I'm representing North Preston at this particular time because in North Preston we have official representation. I used to hold that title back in the 90s, but I don't hold that title now. What I'm going to give you is how I see things and generally how some of the people from our area may see things. More specifically, how I think the generations to come are going to look at it, because there is a difference. And I'll get into that in a moment.

We have not become what we could have become as a result of European colonialism and North American slavery. If you do research on Africa back over thousands of years, you'll find there were these great kingdoms, empires and they had all sorts of leaders in many different areas: science, technology, philosophy, industry, global trade, monetary system, leisure activity, family structures, communities. They had it all. I've even learned that in medieval times there was international trading going on throughout the continent. I learned from a South American writer that several centuries before Columbus, there was West African trade with the North American natives, and [with] South American and Central American natives.

This is what we were. This is what all of us here probably would have been had that slavery, slave trade and that colonialism never happened. So the question I'm raising is what could we have become had that not happened?

We could have been – I believe that we could have been prosperous societies, whether that had been on the African continent or on this side of the Atlantic. I think we could have become prosperous societies in all these areas: economic and global trade, education and all that.

Now, someone may say, Well, what's all this ethnic stuff got to do with North Preston? That's the question that will be raised back home ... where I come from. What does that have to do with me?

I have heard so many people say, I ain't an African. Just a few



*Once you're the beneficiary of slavery, there isn't a whole lot you have to do to inherit the riches that continually recycle from slavery. So who is responsible? European societies and the European clone societies in South, Central and North America.*

– Allister Johnson

days ago someone was saying in a general conversation with a bunch of guys around, I ain't African. That, in itself, I present to you as part of the evidence. That's the evidence of the damage, the cultural damage that has been done to my people – if someone black as me can stand up and say, I ain't African. Really, that's the damage. That's the evidence of the damage.

I don't blame the people who [say] this, who I've heard say it. [That 's the] cultural genocide that has happened. It's that eurocentric education which has taught us [per] Darwin's theory that we are not really people.

So here we are, on the promised land. Brought here to the promised land. And I'm not going to go through the Nova Scotia story. Most of you, I think, know the Nova Scotia story. I'll just touch on it briefly for our foreign guests in case they don't know. The brothers from South Africa already told you how our ancestors joined the British and all that long story and the British promise, Oh, we got land for you up there in Nova Scotia. Stolen property, stolen property ...

A few months ago when I was in Shuswap territory, also known as British Columbia, I spoke in a Talking Circle. I had three messages – one for the White, one for the Native and one for people of African descent. I said to the white people, "you're in possession of stolen property." Here in Nova Scotia it's Mi'kmaq territory. Stolen Mi'kmaq territory.

So here we are. We're in the Eurocentric promised land. What do they give us? A rock. Put us on – and if you don't believe me, you can come to North Preston or you can go to Beechville. You can go to Upper Hammonds Plains, go to any one of these communities and what do you see? You just see



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a rock. The whole community sits on a rock. My house is not parallel [to] the road because I didn't want to spend the extra money to blast out the rock so that it can be straight. My house is – a rock.

Now, how on God's earth did they expect us to plant a crop and survive in 1784 and 1813? According to what was passed on to me from my elders, they expected us to die. They planned for us to die. That's why they pushed us up there on Beech Hill, now known as Beechville. They didn't expect [us] to survive on [those] rocks.

I mentioned education. In 1895 one of our historians had recorded, "It's a shame that there's no school in the New Road Settlement." (That's what North Preston was called a century ago. Prior to that it was known as Preston North). And so there was a generation of people that had no education, had no schooling. In other words, I'm the great grandson of a generation [for whom] there was no school.

Then they brought in the segregated schools. Those of you from Nova Scotia know all that I'm talking about – the segregated schools. I found out from the *Black Learners' Advisory Committee Report, 1994*, that in my time or my youngest sisterr's time, \$20 per student was misappropriated. Don't know where it's at to this day. [The] former Halifax County School Board knows. Some of these people may even be still living today. \$20 per student, gone! How on God's earth are you supposed to get yourself an equal education after being ripped off? You know there's reparation owed for that.

We've been robbed of our full identity. I mentioned about the people who say, I ain't African. That's part of the robbery. We can only guess who we are from our original genetics. We can only guess. We'll never know. That's robbery. And reparation is owed for that. Because we are the only people that I know of – now, there may be more, but we are the only people in the world that I know of – who cannot trace their ancestors to a nation. And I refuse to use the word "tribe". (To me, tribe is one of these eurocentric words designed to belittle people. And there are several more: underdeveloped, developing, Third World. You can use them. I ain't). Can't trace our ancestry to anyone. We can only make guesses. Maroons. But then the Maroons are Cormanti, Ashanti, Akan. But who am I? Can't make any traces. Black refugees and Black Loyalists, probably [Angola?] But just probably. That's a robbery. That's theft. To my knowledge, anyone else

in the world can connect themselves to their ancestry back to several centuries.

I mentioned about being on stolen property. What's that got to do with us today here in North Preston, or here in the Preston area, here in Nova Scotia? When I was in Shuswap territory, they were quite astounded when I said, "I don't know a single person [who looks] like me that owns a boat, a ship that can transport goods around the world. I don't know a single person who owns a plane. Don't know one person or haven't heard of anyone that looks like us who owns or runs a building over five or ten storeys." Do we control or have any type of clout in any of our governments, financial and world institutions? None of that. We don't own any of that...

Someone may say, "well, Black people can just pick themselves up and go into business. I know so-and-so who is really successful." And another one, "I heard of so- and-so who is really successful." Well, yeah, there are many. But as a people, we are still marginalized. As a people, we are still on the sidelines. As a people, we're still struggling. I haven't even heard of a trade mission from Canada to Africa. Maybe there has been one. If there have been, they're really keeping it a big secret. And who has benefitted from it? Who is benefiting from it?

I haven't heard of any types of trade connections between Africa, especially West Africa and us. I found out three years ago when I met with some South Africans shortly after Mandela had become President, that South Africa is the closest port to Nova Scotia. I couldn't figure out how that could be, geographically. Maybe to Canada. But how much trade is going on between us?

Once you're the beneficiary of slavery, there isn't a whole lot you have to do to inherit the riches that continually recycle from slavery. A professor at [Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax] spoke very eloquently a few years ago about belonging to the privileged [segment of] society. All you have to do is be born into it. You inherit it.

So who is responsible? European societies. I'm not going to name countries other than Canada and Great Britain and the European clone societies in South, Central and North America. You have never, ever heard of Canada and the United States described that way, have you? Clone societies. Clones of European society. Clone countries.



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[These may be the beneficiaries] of ... the deprivations inflicted by their ancestors. I've heard people say, "well, that was way back then. What's that got to do with me? I didn't do nothing to you. I'm just living my life." I've already mentioned that if you're a beneficiary, then you're reaping the benefits of the blood, sweat and tears that come from my ancestors. So if you're a beneficiary, you owe. Your societies owe.

The other thing that I'd like you to consider comes from the *Old Testament*, a line from the book of *Numbers*, Chapter 14, Verse 18 that goes something like this: "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." So you see, God Himself recognized that reparation is real and reparation is owed to us. Because he spoke it through his *Holy Bible*.

I understand that not everybody is Christian like me. But I do

believe that most of us, Christian or not, believe in God. In my Christian bible, my God has said that the sins of the fathers will become the responsibilities of the sons for generations after. So today's generation has to think very seriously about reparation. I can't give you any legal perspective because I'm not a lawyer. All I can do is present you what I think could be considered as evidence. It is up to you, the court of reparation, globally, to decide if it is circumstantial or concrete. I can't decide that. I can just present it to you.

So I present that little piece of evidence for reparation. And I hope the Nova Scotian story [would] get to the court of reparation in South Africa. It should get there. Somebody's got to carry it.

Thank you very much.

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## AN OPEN HEARING ON RACISM

**Yvonne Atwell**

Policy Advisor, Former Member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly

I'd just like to take a moment to do what we did yesterday, [that] is, pay homage to our seniors and elders in the room. Runoko said yesterday that anybody that was older than him was an elder. And he said he was 46. So anybody in this room that's older than me is an elder. And I can see maybe three people. Thank you for the opportunity.

Today, of course, it's an honour and a pleasure to bring an overview of the Open Hearing on Racism, the first for Nova Scotia and the first for Canada. This Hearing took place on March 21st at the Lord Nelson Hotel [in Halifax]. To quote Dr. Thornhill, this Hearing "is a first. It is a first not only for the people of African descent living in Canada, but it's also a Canadian first for the new millennium, this third millennium." So this was a historical event and a very, very important one.

I will attempt to do three things this morning. The first is an overview to give you an idea of what the proceedings looked like, to lay [it] out for you so you can visualize the room [and to] understand what that environment was like and how that environment was set so that people would feel safe and comfortable to bring forth their views and perspectives. Second, I want to talk a little bit about the emotions because ... emotions move us. Not the intellect, per se, but the emotions. And finally I want to briefly talk about the healing process.

What was this Hearing about? [It] was about many, many things. It was about creating space where individuals could speak freely in a safe environment supported by people that they knew understood the issues. The room itself was laid out somewhat like a courtroom. The Seniors entered the room to the [sound of] drumming by Wayn Hamilton and Henry Bishop. They came in and proceeded onto an elevated stage from where they could oversee the They were followed by the Eminent Bench Persons.

The room was full with people who came to testify and to listen. There were also observers who sat quietly at the back of the room. No one was allowed to intervene or interject when someone was testifying or speaking. It was a place of pride, a place of humility, a place of dignity and a place of strength.

The Hearing was also about having space where our collective cultural memory was validated, as well as our service to humanity as Black people. I watched the faces of some of the



*The Hearing was about oneness. Each person who testified also recognised that there was a connectedness to others in the room. You could see it and feel it as people spoke.*

– Yvonne Atwell

people in the audience ... you could see smiles, you could see pride. .. because people had an opportunity to open up and to speak about [their experiences].

In the centre of the room was a huge drum draped with kente cloth. In my view, this pulled the energy to the centre of the room and allowed it to [radiate and permeate] through the rest of the proceedings.

The Hearing was about providing support and being able to [perceive] how we have collectively made it this far. Yesterday Mr. Rashidi talked about the energy and the power of the Black communities of Nova Scotia that he visited as being intact. After so much [suffering] they remain intact. That's something we have to be proud of. This Hearing was about that.

It was about oneness. Each person who testified also recognised that there was a connectedness to others in the room. You could see it and feel it as people spoke. It was about supporting and understanding and holding on to our brothers and sisters. Not only at the Hearing here in Halifax, but throughout the universe.

What is racism? We have many, many definitions of what racism is. In this Hearing that was about racism, Dr. Thornhill clearly identified yesterday that racism creates criminals. It's cruel and punishing; it's crippling, it's confining. And somebody makes a profit from all of that. How sick and how sad!

The proceedings presented a [picture of our experiences in] employment, religion, recreation, entertainment; that is, everything that we do every day. I believe the biggest thing

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that came out of this Hearing [centred] on two major themes that kept recurring during the entire day and through the written submissions. They were about employment, about work, about our economy, about economics, about what it is that we need to live. If you can't work, you can't feed yourself, you can't take care of your family. The issues of work and employment: of not being able to move forward in employment; of not being able to address your concerns even though you pay union dues; that even when you have a systemic complaint, it is difficult [to deal] with [it] at the Human Rights Commission. Those two themes came through very, very strongly.

People also became quite disturbed and emotional during some of the presentations. [They] actually broke down and cried because, for the first time, they may have been experiencing the full brunt of actually talking about [their experiences], of bringing [them] out, of saying it and feeling comfortable, knowing that they were not going to be judged in that room. For me personally, it was extremely emotional. The development of the Hearing that came from the prior workshops ... was a must; it was the beginning of a process towards healing.

So when we talk about reparation, we [may] talk about ... the financial [aspect] of [it]. But how do we deal with the emotional? How do we get emotional reparation? How do we heal that? And what does that cost? Is there enough money in the world to do that? Or is it about money, at all? [When I think about] emotional reparation ... I think about what happened ... because even if you had all the money in the world, the scars will be still there.

I want to briefly talk about some of the evidence that came forward [at] the Hearing. The evidence was pretty specific. People talked about the process of dealing with racism, particularly in the workplace. Most of the people who presented [evidence] talked about the workplace. They talked about the processes that they employed to attempt correcting a situation before saying, "Well, this has got to go to the Human Rights Commission; " or, "I have to leave;" or, "I have to quit my job;" or, "I have to go on sick leave because I can't manage this."

The evidence is very real as people try to move forward in the work that they do. The evidence is very real when people talk about education and how their children are not getting educated, even though there are many mechanisms in place to ensure that. The evidence is very real when we look at racism

as a health hazard. Mind you, we have 12 determinants of health. There needs to be a 13th ... "racism" as a determinant of health. We talked about what is good health around racism. If we are bombarded with racist views day in and day out, how do we remain in good health? How do we remain in good health when we're constantly fighting the system? And people talked about what it looked like in the hospital corridors. [They] talked about what racism looked like when you enter a hospital room or when you go to a doctor. So the evidence that came forward was very, very real.

If every step of the way there seems to be those kinds of obstacles that challenge you, how do you get by them? How do you talk about them? There must be a forum at which to talk about them. That is where the healing process begins. [People have talked] about [us] carrying forth the issues of reparation. But should we not be healed? Should we not be in the process of healing ourselves so that we have the energy and the capability to move [reparation] forward?

And how do we start that healing process? Well, I think we've already started it. The Open Hearing began that process. But it needs to be carried on. We need to talk and discuss. We need to validate each other's experiences. We need to continue to understand [each other]. And we need to know who we are as African people. It needs to be a journey. Somebody said to me a couple of days ago, "We need a plan for the next 200 years." A plan to heal, a plan to grow, a plan to learn and a plan to take our rightful place in society. [We need] a plan to go back to our roots and to understand where we came from and why we are here. The Hearing helped us start that process. But the work is not finished.

I want to go back to what I said earlier, two specific things that kept recurring in that Hearing: the issue around employment and the issue around the Human Rights Commission. If we don't have employment, we don't have good health so we can't fight [our] battles. When you're employed you buy food and you live in decent housing. Employment is supposed to cater to the democratic representation of workers in a workplace. The second one was the Human Rights Commission because it's government ... the federal government as well that goes around the globe talking about how we have such wonderful institutions in our country to address racism and racial discrimination. So [our governments] need to be held accountable and responsible.

I just want to leave you with a quote from Sister Lynn Jones. At the Hearing, we talked about the roll call. The roll call was



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about calling on the organisations, groups and individuals [responsible for racism] to be present in the room. But I believe it was also for us to be present to collectively deal with the issues of racism [that we face as] communities. And Sister Lynn says,

*“I am here. I am present and accounted for. And I ain’t going away until all my people can stand up side by side and shoulder to shoulder and answer that roll call so that they can say,*

**Present.**

*No more drugs on our streets, **present.***

*No more unemployment, **present.***

*I live in decent, affordable housing, **present.***

*My culture and identity are intact, **present.***

*My health needs are satisfied, **present.**”*

Thank you.

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## QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

**SPEAKER** Mr. Jordan, you have given us some very important strategies. You call them survival strategies, but also lessons from the struggle. On a more personal level, I would like you to give us some insight into what South Africa has learned from the experiences of other countries on the continent and probably Latin America where African peoples have regained political freedom but have not so far enjoyed economic freedom. We know that South Africa is rich, and probably it is one of the richest [countries] in natural resources. And yet, as you told us I believe yesterday or the day before, the wealth of South Africa remains in the hands of the former colonial masters, or at least the white population in South Africa. My understanding is that the ANC had made a commitment not to nationalise [the economy] in order to obtain support from the western powers for the transition to democracy. What experience have you [gained] so far from, let's say, Zimbabwe's land grabbing due to frustration [on the part of the Blacks]? Could you share that with us?

**SPEAKER** Yes. Obviously there are a number of lessons to be learned. But there are also, I think, a number of empirical facts to be noted and which we have to take account of.

If we'd had our [own way], as the oppressed people of South Africa, we would have preferred seizure of power whether by armed force or by other means. But it didn't unfold that way. It was, perhaps, fortunate because seizure of power would probably have entailed a great deal of blood-letting. It could have ... led to a very long protracted war, which we would have won in the end, but in which the economic infrastructure of the country might well have been destroyed.

Looking then at a number of options that came together at the end of the 1980s to create a window of opportunity for negotiated settlement, it was, I think, the correct moral choice to take the step [to not nationalise the economy]. But having taken that step, there had to be trade-offs. Of course, trade-offs are always an unpleasant thing to go into. They lead to messy, awkward compromises.

One of the trade-offs was that since we're going for a negotiated settlement, the route to take was that of constitutional negotiations, elections and then a government emerging from that. Now, the conjuncture at which that window of opportunity opened was one in which you had the collapse, for example, of the social countries of Eastern Europe on which a number of independent African states, especially those in Southern Africa, had depended. Not because we were neces-

sarily supporters of the Soviet regime or subscribed to the views of the Soviet regimes or the regimes in Eastern Europe. But because those countries [supplied us with] weapons [for our liberation struggle]. The weapons we had were not from the United States or from Britain or from France. Got nothing from them. We had to use the weapons [from the East]. Those are the weapons that brought [our] freedom.

It's also true that in terms of military skill and training, those were the countries that [helped] us. We aren't ashamed of it. We had to find our allies where we could. We weren't going to say, "Oh, well, the West won't give us weapons. Well, in that case, we'll just have to endure oppression forever. ..." We weren't going to do that. We took the weapons from the Russians. Took the training from the Chinese. Took it from the East Germans, from the Czechs, whoever would give it to us – the Cubans. When the racist regime in South Africa, fearful about its own future because it could see it was living on borrowed time, set out to destabilize and destroy countries like Mozambique and Angola, again it was countries of Eastern Europe, China and Cuba that came to [their] assistance.

While the economies [of the East bloc countries] collapsed because of their own problems, that of course meant we had a situation in which, [as] was proclaimed by one gentleman, the West had won the Cold War and [we had] one superpower [left] in the world. Now, in that context, it isn't easy when you go to Geneva for the World Economic Forum or any of the many forums and they say to you, "now, look here, we don't like this idea of taking the private property of capitalists. We don't care how they acquired it. But if you do that, we are going to make you pay. We're going to punish you for doing this." They have the strength, not only to say it, but to do it. And there's nothing you'll do about it. So then you have to make a trade-off. You have to compromise. That was the situation we found ourselves in.

Which meant, then, that if we were going to transform the economy of our country and also begin to democratize the ownership of economic wealth in our country, we were going to have to do it by means other than nationalization. That is just the hard reality of the situation today. It doesn't mean it will always be like that. And we can change that situation sooner, provided we act together.

It's very easy, you see – and one reads it in all sorts of journals and in magazines, educational sheets – to [denounce] ...



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the government of South Africa for having made compromises and trade-offs. People sitting in Washington, in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris [denouncing us saying] , “African National Congress has sold out the poor.” It’s very easy to say that. But can those people sitting in those capitals in the west bring pressure to bear on their governments, corporations, to treat developing countries better? Not to use their economic might to squeeze us? No, they cannot. They do not.

It is the easy option to condemn [the] ANC government. It’s a much tougher road to have to put pressure on the Chase Manhattan Bank and the David Rockefellers and say, “Now, listen here, you have squeezed the poor of the world long enough. You stop it now. And if you don’t stop it, we are going to stop you.” That’s hard to do. So what do people do? Denounce the aims of government in South Africa. Print huge banner headlines: “A-N-C has sold out”. David Rockefeller chuckles softly to himself and continues screwing the poor of the world as they did yesterday. And because people in New York are doing nothing about it, he will continue doing it tomorrow and the week after that. That is a tough situation to find ourselves in.

Now, you can only change that situation to the extent that people in the developed countries are able to tame the corporations and also to pressure [their] governments ... to stop behaving the way they do. This also, I think, underscores the importance of coalition-building between, not only the countries of Africa, but all the countries of the south and people in the countries of the north, especially communities such as those of people of African descent who trace their origins to the African continent. [And with] other people oppressed, discriminated against, marginalized in this country, and of course, other social and political forces who have a commitment to improving the situation of the poor in the world.

I don’t know if that speaks to your question. I hope it does.

**SPEAKER** Brother Jordan, I wanted to ask you about the whole issue of allies on, maybe, a more simplistic level, that is, in our struggles here. We have developed in various ways over time. At times we have attempted to develop our communities and to attack the issue of racism by gathering together, working alone and saying, we have to do it ourselves. At other times we have sought allies. At points this has been very destructive because our allies haven’t understood the role that they should play in our liberation struggle. So, they end up trying to set the agenda and to take over our

issues. Now, in South Africa and on the scale that you were operating during that time, you said you did a lot of coalition building and working with allies. Did you develop some kind of framework or manifesto or something that provided guidance in terms of how other groups would work with you?

**SPEAKER** I think it’s an important question. And I was very conscious of some of those problems when I mentioned George III and the Loyalists and all that. Because that’s an instance where African people formed an alliance with a more powerful force in the hope that they could gain something for it. They gained something in that they were freed from slavery, but in the end they were sold out again because they were weak.

The strategic difference, of course, between our situation in South Africa is that we were the majority population. So when we built alliances, it was much easier for us to be the dominant force because we had the numbers. Now, when you are in a situation in which you are not the dominant population, the situation is different. But I think, even in that instance, one has to work [it] out, which is why I said we are not trying to prescribe, on the basis of [our] people’s experience, how you build and construct alliances that are going to serve you.

I think it is a pity that in a conference such as this we did not have a wide representation of the First Nations people in Canada. Like other colonial people, they have been dispossessed and reduced to subjects in the manner I referred to, that other colonial people were. Of course, in this part of the world they are not as numerous, let’s say, as further inland, going towards the west because of the genocide we have described before. But it should be of some significance for African Canadians to try and find ways and means of building coalitions and alliances with the indigenous people of Canada in the struggle against racism. They’re as much victims of racism as African people are.

There are also other people from other parts of the world – what is usually referred to as the Third World. [Also] a [fairly] large Asian population now [lives] on the West coast of Canada. I don’t know how large, but significant ... It should be possible, also, to build coalitions there. There are also communities of faith, other social and political forces in society who do not have an interest in racism. It should also be possible [to work with them].

But I’m not the one to say, “do it this way, do it that way, do

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it the other way.” You have your own experiences that you have to draw on and figure out how you do that, how you structure it. Of course, It’s always good to have some sort of a minimum program that everyone agrees on when you build a coalition. For example, the coalition that African Americans were able to build in the United States between 1955 and, let’s say, 1965 with the Voting Rights Bill of ‘65, involved not only themselves. But of course, they were in the leadership of that coalition. In addition to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, you had a whole coalition of communities of faith that Martin Luther King was able to put together. [This] included Jewish community leaders and other Christian churches not necessarily in the south. If you look at the faces in the march in Washington, [there was] quite a broad representation of the American Labour Movement. I know the AFL/CIO is no paragon of virtue, especially with regard to African American rights, but they were in the march in Washington. [And there was] a host of other forces like that.

So you see, there’s an example. Of course, that coalition began to disintegrate after 1965. But it only disintegrated after it had achieved its minimum demand, one person, one vote, in every part of the union. Having achieved that, of course, there was a completely new political situation. [Before then] it was inconceivable, for example, that Jesse Jackson could run for President of the United States. And of course, even Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition was also an attempt to put together another type of coalition. Post ‘65.

One has to figure out what one is going to do based on the realities of your own country and your own experiences. I can’t say to you, do it this way, do it that way. I just don’t know enough about Canada to be able to say that. But I would urge that those things be explored.

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## WORKSHOP: AN OPEN HEARING ON RACISM

Yvonne Atwell and Winnie Benton

*Racism and the Black World Response Symposium Society*

This workshop set out to do two things. First, to help participants better understand what Racism is, and how it affects everyday life. Second, to give them the tools that would help them to be reconciled to the fact that Racism does exist.

From start, the facilitators pointed out that a workshop makes the ideal setting for a discussion on the impact of Racism on an individual. As well, it could give the support one needs in dealing with this complex issue that has had an impact on all our lives. The only problem that arises in an open discussion of this kind is that Racism tends to stir emotions. Sometimes when people get passionate about any subject, it could hurt the logical progression of a discussion. Each individual may have a personal bias as to what should be important in any discussion on Racism. Personal passions, such as the law and politics on the subject, could take away from the intended goal of any discussion on Racism.

It was not a surprise that these passions led to a spirited discussion on the subject. The discussion related Racism to subjects from the United Nations, to capitalism, to personal stress. However, the main concern was for the workshop to build upon the *Principled Statement Against Racism*. This statement reads as follows:

WHEREAS *In Nova Scotia Racism is psychologically and physically painful;*

WHEREAS *Racism is pervasive, relentless, and geographically divisive;*

WHEREAS *Racism denies our existence and our contributions to Canadian society;*

WHEREAS *Racism wreaks destruction on the social and spiritual fabric of our Communities and families;*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. *We condemn Racism as violent, criminal, immoral and repressive.*
2. *We demand actions of redress on all these fronts.*
3. *We demand the eradication of Racism.*

Discussion was structured around a series of questions to which participants gave responses. These were as follows:

### PART I

#### Winnie Benton: Racism and its Psychological Impact on its Victims

*Question: how do you describe Racism?*

Responses:

- Painful
- Power
- Judgment
- Stereotype
- The 3 Ps: prejudice, power and privilege

#### **Racism versus discrimination**

*The main difference between these two phenomena is that Racism involves power. It requires that one race must have the power to oppress another. The working of Racism includes the use of economic, social and political power to oppress the development and advancement of its victims. Discrimination can be tolerated within society as long as it is fair. An example is giving women leave of absence from work so they could give birth.*

*Question: how does society judge us?*

Responses:

- Second class
- Trouble maker
- Lazy
- Drug dealer
- Lack intelligence

It was the consensus that Racism puts up psychological barriers that could limit our personal growth. Mrs. Benton gave a personal analogy of this point. In high school she always wanted to be a doctor or a nurse. Unfortunately, she did not pursue those careers because she thought no one in society would attend a Black practice. As a result of the prevailing stereotype she 'settled' on becoming a secretary.



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**Yvonne Atwell and Winnie Benton**

*Question: where does racism exist?*

Responses:

- In our minds
- Media
- Legal system
- School
- Government
- Workplace
- Our homes
- Politics

It was pointed out that a Black person could perpetrate racist thoughts. For example, thinking that all blacks are lazy.

*Question: What is the emotional baggage that racism causes?*

Responses:

- Anger
- Stress
- Confusion
- Depression
- Lack of self-esteem
- Isolation
- Denial
- Lack of motivation

## **Emotional Baggage**

### **Where does Racism exist?**

### **How does society judge us?**

It was agreed that in view of the pervasiveness of Racism, Black people in general must develop coping mechanisms to deal with the emotional baggage it thrusts upon us. Indeed, if anybody feels that they are looked upon as inferior, they may start acting in that manner. One coping mechanism suggested, therefore, is to increase one's personal knowledge of Black History, and knowledge of the psychological effects of Racism. Such knowledge helps to change a Black person's outlook on life, and helps build his or her self-esteem. This information is also important for all people, because it helps to combat Racism. Beyond this, it was agreed that ultimately, what is needed is healing for the wounds inflicted by Racism on Black people.

## **PART II**

### **Yvonne Atwell: Reconciliation**

*Rhetorical question: how do we deal with all of these issues? (Referring to the ones that Mrs. Benton had made earlier).*

She observed that the issue of Racism is often put on the 'front burner' in the Black Community. Because of this fact, other issues, such as those that are personal, or those that are related to business and community development, often suffer.

At a more general level, she pointed out that all people suffer common losses regardless of race. Some of these common losses were specified, along with the common reactions that people of every race express to them:

### **LOSSES IN LIFE REGARDLESS OF RACE RESULTS OF THE LOSSES**

#### **(FEELINGS)**

#### **WHAT DO WE DO AS A RESULT OF THESE LOSSES**

#### **(BEHAVIOR)**

- Death
- loss of self-esteem
- crying
- Jobs
- Depression
- substance abuse
- Youth
- Lowering of self-worth
- lashing out
- Love
- Abusive
- giving up
- physical ability
- Angry
- sleep
- Dreams
- Pessimistic/cynical
- withdrawal/anti-social
- Health
- yelling
- Promotion
- taking it home
- Opportunity
- Acceptance



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## Yvonne Atwell and Winnie Benton

It was emphasized that all of these common stresses are piled on top of those that Black people face alone on account of Racism.

*Rhetorical question: Is it possible to become successful with all of these things going on?*

Reactions to this question brought up issues of guilt and victimization in the Black Community on account of being at the receiving end of Racism. With specific regard to victimization, it was emphasized that the way to counter racism is to throw off the victim mentality, and to resist its guilt-imposing impact. *It was urged that we must cease looking at Racism in the manner that causes us to fall into the psychological trap of victimization.* Rather, drawing on the fact that we have, over a long time, overcome the oppressiveness of Racism, it is important for us now to focus on the same attitude of resistance.

Overall, the discussion on this aspect of the workshop theme acknowledged that Black people must understand the stresses involved in being black in order to formulate effective coping mechanisms against it. Resistance is one of these mechanisms.

### Recommendations

#### 1) On how to deal with Racism on a personal level

- a) increase knowledge of Black History and Culture for all people
- b) increase knowledge of psychological effects of Racism
- c) increase funding to strengthen old, and create new mentoring programs
- d) more workshops for young people
- e) strengthen ties within and between Black Communities
- f) Black assistance program (victim aid)

#### 2) On how to deal with Racism within our current institutional setting

g) changes to the current Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission:

- i) more autonomy from government
- ii) more power
- iii) proactive approach
- iv) stiffer penalties for violations
- v) a more simplified process when dealing with cases
- h) increase research on Racism
- i) push for a legal right to talk about Racism in court (for example current case against Rocky Jones who challenged the police's treatment of two young Black girls in court)
- j) legislation against Racism (making Racism illegal)

#### 3) On how to challenge Racism outside of national institutions

- a) Present a case before the World Court

#### 4) General recommendations

- k) We must develop an effective action plan and implement some, if not all of these proposals. Otherwise, we would give credence to the common saying that "talk is cheap."
- l) increase and maintain networking among Black organizations
- m) more follow up conferences and dialogue

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## WORKSHOP: SCIENCE, HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

Dr. Sampson Sarpong and Dr. Charmaine Royale

Howard University

### Indoor Allergies and Asthma —The Inner City Perspective

Dr. Sarpong noted that Nova Scotia has the highest incidents of asthma in Canada. More generally, that the disease is a predominantly inner-city health problem. Research shows that there is a racial factor in asthma cases. For example, more Blacks than Whites suffer asthmatic attacks. As well, more Blacks than Whites die from it.

He pointed out that incidences of asthma are related to genetic and environmental factors, and exposure to allergens. This is worsened by poverty, ethnicity and urbanization. Thus, African-American children living in poverty are at greater risk from the disease. This is because they are exposed to allergens, and to carriers like cockroaches, mice and dust mites. Indeed, evidence shows that exposure to allergens over the first few years of life induces sensitization to childhood asthma. Continuing exposure maintains inflammation in the nose and lungs, resulting in occurrence of the disease in adulthood.

Among children, one effect of the disease is that it increases learning disability. For adults, it imposes economic losses. Studies indicate that one-fifth of asthma patients do not receive the required medical help. And it is people – mainly Blacks – in the lower economic stratum of society who have greater susceptibility to it.

In terms of cure, Dr. Sarpong made it clear that early treatment is useful because it prevents asthma from scarring lung tissue. However, people can reduce its incidence by taking basic preventive steps. These include breast feeding their children and practicing better hygiene. Medication and allergen avoidance also help avoid the disease.

To benefit from advances in medical research related to asthma, he recommended that Blacks should lend themselves to studies on the disease. But he conceded that the willingness of Blacks to do so would be enhanced when Black presence in the medical field increases. This would increase the trust of Blacks in such research efforts. More generally, he noted that the recruitment of Black people into the sciences is necessary to build Black confidence in the aims and activities of science institutions in Canada.

### Health Disparities: How Should the Black World Respond?

Dr. Royale noted that there is a high incidence and prevalence of many diseases among the Black population in the diaspora. These diseases include HIV/AIDS, prostate cancer, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and sickle cell anaemia. This is so even though no particular disease is peculiar to any single racial group.

She pointed out that diseases result from an interaction of genes with the environment. However, *health is a “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” On this score, racism could provoke or worsen certain diseases.* Consequently, the important point is the frequency at which certain diseases occur amongst a given class or race of people. Hence, the facilitative agents of diseases seem to relate more to economics, education and the will to change and improve our lives.

Therefore as to strategies for improving the health of the Black World, the first step is that African Diaspora populations must set the agenda. We must do so by, first, holding international symposia – like this one – at which to discuss and plot out the processes and mechanisms for dealing with the matters that affect us. Second, we must spearhead research efforts by establishing research centers and institutions that address the health concerns of African Diaspora populations. Also, we must formulate the research questions ourselves, and ensure that they are joined to an appropriate combination of social justice issues. We must facilitate effective dissemination of research results. And then, we must train and mentor our youth to become leaders in basic and social science research, and in public health.

A major strategy in this regard is to influence the health policy process. We should collect data and input from stakeholders, develop policy options, validate policy recommendations, disseminate recommendations, and implement those recommendations. As an example of the community getting involved in research efforts, the Human Genome Research Center in Howard University stands out. The Center is geared towards improving the health of the Black community. The opportunities and possibilities the Center’s work opens up include an increased understanding of population/human his-



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tory, and identification of the ancestral origins of certain illnesses.

However, the Center faces a number of challenges. These include low level of Black involvement in human genome research, misapplication and misinterpretation of information derived from the research, and inequity in resource allocation. As to the latter, evidence indicates that there is a perennial insufficiency of funding for diseases associated with Africans. A specific example is sickle-cell anaemia. Though this has been the most studied genetic disease, yet no “cure” was found for it until 1996. This is because racism is a major factor that influences research funding.

Other challenges that obstruct requisite attention to health issues affecting Black people include insurance and employment discrimination; inadequate access of Black people to, and utilization of healthcare/genetic services; discriminatory

agenda and attitudes of healthcare providers; limited public and professional education on the part of the Black population itself. Other non-clinical integration challenges include exploitation of Black peoples’ health information in the criminal justice system, and discrimination in the educational system to deny us chances by which we could increase our presence in scientific fields.

With all the foregoing factors influencing and affecting our state of *health*, we need to understand our history as a whole, and in its specific relation to the health aspect of our lives. This way, we would be better equipped to overcome the obstacles that seek to prevent us from improving our *health*. As Alfred North Whitehead warned, “those who do not understand history are doomed to repeat it.”

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## WORKSHOP: YOUTH ISSUES

**Steve Benton**

Youth Advocate, Brothers Reaching Out Society

This workshop was attended by 35 participants. Majority were young people, along with a few adults. Participants sat in a roundtable format and the facilitator encouraged a pedagogical style of communication for clearer presentations and comments. The workshop dealt with the topic, "Racism and Black Response to It." Specifically, it was directed at finding out the impact that racism has on the Youth. They were encouraged to ponder this based on their experiences, their understanding of racism, and who a racist may be.

The session began with each one introducing himself and herself. This was to make each one feel comfortable with the other. Pieces of paper were then passed round for participants to put down their fears, hopes and expectations.

Some of the *expectations* given were expressed in question form as follows:

What do the youths in our community and society want, and how can they be empowered? How can we keep our youths healthy in this society where they come face to face with racism? Having experienced some form of racism either in school, the workplace, stores, how do our youths identify racism, and do they speak out? How do they deal with racism when they feel that they have been affected by it?

Beginning with the concept of "racism", participants thought that it meant "a state of hating other people," and "an act that is equal to power + prejudice." One young person equated the latter with racial discrimination. He thought that racism is an act where one feels inferior to another, such as when a Black person feels that he is less important than someone from another race.

Testimonies of personal experiences were given. These were done to contextualise the *concerns* that people felt arose for them as a result of their experiences of racism. One 16 year old Black male related how he was arrested and charged with a motor vehicle offence for riding his bicycle on the sidewalk. He was remanded and released later when no charges could be filed against him.

A young female from East Preston, Halifax, Canada, expressed bitterness at the degree of racial discrimination at Cole Harbour High, where she attended with her brother and

their friends. They have been constantly abused, picked on and treated and called all sorts of derogatory names because they are Black. The school security and the principal have also singled them out. She told her story with a lot of emotion, a lost look, and a very clear indication that they are unhappy with the treatment they get in schools for no fault of theirs. She spoke about her brother who is a junior at the school, being called a "nigger" by a White student. They got into a fight and the Black students were separated from the White students and were warned by the school security not to say a word else they would be arrested. Meantime, the White students mocked them.

On another occasion, students were asked not to wear head covers to school. A few days after the announcement, White students wore face caps to school and were left free. On another day when three Black students wore face caps to school, two of them were suspended and one was given a warning.

Another female expressed the concern that the recruitment of Black youths for sporting events at high schools and colleges is for the benefit of the schools but not the students. She gave examples where Black youths have been given scholarships to schools for games while their education suffers. They are given pass marks even when it is obvious that they are not learning anything. At the end of the day, they can't read or write, while they are supposed to have passed through university.

Another participant highlighted how systematic racism has been targeted at low-income communities. This is because as minorities, they are considered to need more policing to avoid crime and to protect the people in other communities. In this case, young and old alike are harassed constantly for sitting in their cars, for standing on the lawn, for talking on the road etc. In short, very flimsy excuses are given for indiscriminate arrests of Black youths.

### Impact of Racism

One of the issues the facilitator drew attention to was whether Black people could be racists. One participant said No, because Blacks do not have the power to be racists – they do not have the economic and political might to be so. Besides, they are culturally, spiritually and naturally



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**Steven Benton...**

respecters of other people without any special relation to skin colour and skin colour differences. "It is not a Black thing and will never be."

Consequent upon that, the young people expressed how racism makes them feel. They spoke from having seen their whole families go through it and having people they know suffer in a system of oppression that perpetuates gross underdevelopment against them. They were visibly worried and afraid of the realities of racism. Some of the participants said racism makes them feel low and inferior as people. In others, it induces disrespect for the law and those that enforce or implement them. Others said it makes them identify stereotypes that are imbedded in the system. For others, it is a cause of anger.

## **Encouragement and Recommendations**

The young people were encouraged to speak out when they feel they have been treated unfairly by police officers, school teachers and principals. They were advised to work together and to always stand firm, strong and courageous in their pursuit of justice. They are to always remember that they are not alone in this fight for a better tomorrow for the Black race. It was made plain to them that the fight is a life-long one, and their active participation in it is very important.

Learning about their heritage, their cultures, and getting education were encouraged. They were also advised to be conscious about their environments, to be disciplined, and to be good citizens of their communities. They were urged to

be articulate in whatever position or circumstances they find themselves.

It was put across that seminars should be organised for youth groups, and networks created to foster awareness among them on these issues so as to prepare and equip them to pursue their destinies. It was also urged that family education on these matters must be done to establish a sound foundation for the youth.

The church was given as an example where youths can develop their spirituality and to speak on issues that of concern to them. The *Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF)* in East Preston was commended for the work it has been doing and was encouraged to continue with its efforts to get more young people involved in its activities. The facilitator encouraged the development of the spirituality in their struggle against racism. He drew on examples of how Martin Luther King Jnr. used the Bible as a tool of expression for Black liberation.

## **Conclusion**

There was a genuine interest from the youths for more forums like this one, where these issues could be further discussed in terms of specific action steps that could be taken. The facilitator encouraged them to look at this workshop and the conference in Durban South Africa as the beginning of good things to come.

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## WORKSHOP: DISABILITY IN THE DIASPORA

**Roger Jones**

Physical Disability Advocate

**M**r. Jones invited workshop participants to list their experience with disability and the disabled.

**Participant 1:** A teacher reported difficulties encountered by a physically challenged student. These difficulties are the result of access and social expectations. They impact upon the student's attendance and therefore, academic access and performance.

**Participant 2:** Noted lack of attention paid to special difficulties faced by the African Canadian and aboriginal students. There is a lack of awareness of physical challenge issues within the community and the limited services there are, are not racially sensitive.

**Participant 3:** Mother of a physically challenged child; highlights the isolation of physically challenged individuals and stresses importance and necessity of family/community/formal support systems. Visibility of physically challenged community action and support is essential. Yet these contributions are voluntary and unpaid. The "able" must be active, supportive and respectful of the physically challenged. They must form coalitions for change. She offered as an operative: "Focus on what you can do, not what you can't do."

**Participant 4:** Her first awareness of the physically challenged issues was as a child. She saw the "special bus" used by a student with polio as an adventure. She and fellow students played with leg braces but recognised it as a game. They knew nothing of the genuine challenges. She notes impact on professional and social access; psychological impacts of staring and assumption of mental disability; physical impacts of lack of equitable, adequate services.

**Participant 5:** Inexperienced about challenged individuals as a child, she visited a woman who crawled. Later, she recognised the skill level of the woman. Issues of racism and physical challenges are not insurmountable, but partnerships are necessary to confront them and to offer remedies.

**Participant 6:** Listed no childhood recognition of issues of the physically challenged, and had no personal encounters until he was 45 years old and his brother had an accident.

He recognises this as "a lot of years of ignorance." He is impressed at the skills and abilities of the physically challenged and notes their general social contribution.

**Participant 7:** Recalls capacities of Mr. White, a carpenter without legs who built houses. He emphasises the determination of the physically challenged.

**Participant 8:** As a child, this participant didn't consider having an impairment as a disability but as an "adventure". Yet now she does notice that many, many services are not available to the hearing impaired. Until very recently, the physically challenged were invisible to her. She had previously worked in a provincial government building which was/is not physically accessible. Currently she works in a building which is not "actively welcoming" to the challenged. This lack of visibility signals lack of compatibility between access issues and participation by the physically challenged in society.

**Participant 9:** Pinpoints the double challenge – racism and able-ism – endured by physically challenged Africans. She notes that such areas of oppression n –able-ism and racism – are too often ignored. Coalitions must be formed to address multiple challenges. Those from within oppressed groups must clean up their own organisations and lead the effort against the oppression.

**Participant 10:** She talked about the lack of welcome she experienced from physically challenged women's groups due to issues of racism within those groups. Nonetheless, the groups claim to advocate for all the physically challenged.

**Roger Jones:** Following the trauma of a spinal cord injury he became aware of the health, physiological and physical challenges endured by the physically challenged. He also discovered he is alone, "with no other like me". Hospital and national organisations ignore the daily issues which confront him. His own community organisations do not recognise him or include him or his issues as a physically challenged African Canadian. He wondered where he would be represented.

Specifically, he had to contact this Symposium for inclusion



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## Roger Jones...

and paid his own way. The web site is non-accessible, demonstrating lack of a support system for physically challenged African Canadians.

Mr. Jones engaged the group in a Disability Lottery activity/role play. In the process, he identified global/international lack of access, and compared the historic segregation of African Canadians to that currently endured by the physically challenged. Notes that such exclusion remains socially acceptable and pervasive.

With regard to the African Diaspora, historically and currently, Africans are confronted by disrespect, hatred and

exclusion. Yet, they themselves lack the foresight to be respectful, loving and inclusive of the physically challenged [among them]. The African Canadian communities and their organisations must become aware of its “able-ism” tendencies, the readiness to discriminate based upon perceived ability/disability.

The workshop made a general call for the international African community to rid itself of “able-ism” tendencies and to foster support, constructive community building to advance the equality and contribution of all people.

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## AN AFRICAN DIASPORIC AGENDA

**Pallo Jordan**

Senior Member of Parliament, *Government of South Africa*

The character of the struggle against racism, racial oppression, racial intolerance of which the African people have been victims for the past five centuries, the character of that struggle has always been international. It has always involved the African people on the continent and those of the Diaspora. So it is quite appropriate that at this time we discuss what, collectively, African people and people of African Descent can and need to do in order to carry that struggle forward.

### South African Women's Day

I am happy also that this keynote address coincides with South African Women's Day, August the 9th. A day which commemorates a mass demonstration by South African women which took place on the 9th of August in 1956. And which was targeting new oppressive legislation directed specifically against African women, the extension of the notorious *Pass Laws* to African women. August 9th became *South African Women's Day* and was declared an official holiday after liberation in 1994. There are three names associated with that demonstration which stand out, although there were thousands of women who were involved in the demonstration. But three names stand out.

The first is the name of Mrs. Lillian N'goye, an African woman, a mother, who began her working life like so many African women as a domestic worker in a White household. The second name that stands out is that of Helen Joseph, a White woman who was dubbed in subsequent years "The Mother of the Revolution" by the people of South Africa during the decade of mass struggles preceding our liberation in the 1980s. The third name that stands out is that of Sophie Williams Debrane, a Coloured woman, also a mother and the only one of the three who is still living today.

And let me explain. That term "Coloured" in South Africa means something very different to what it means here. I know African people in the New World find the word "Coloured" objectionable, patronizing and disgusting. But in South Africa, the term "coloured" is used to apply to people of mixed racial origin. And although it probably is as degrading, people do not find it objectionable. And, given the sort of racial hierarchy that evolved in South Africa, people who are referred to as coloured do constitute a distinct group within the Black population.



*I want to stress ... the importance of struggle and how the struggle humanizes us and transforms those oppressive regimes which wish to degrade and dehumanize, because the struggle is essentially a struggle to take back our humanity*

– Pallo Jordan

I mentioned these three names because I want to focus today on a number of themes. The one theme which I want to stress is the theme of struggle, the importance of struggle and how the struggle humanizes us and transforms those oppressive regimes which wish to degrade and dehumanize, because the struggle is essentially a struggle to take back our humanity which oppression and racial domination seeks to take away from us. The second theme which I want to stress is that of coalitions and alliances. The demonstration of August 9th, 1956, was a demonstration of the power of coalition-building and alliances. And that coalition-building is symbolized by the three women, whom I've already mentioned, who led that march on that day. The third theme which I want to stress and which I think is also captured in the character of the alliance and coalition which led that demonstration on August the 9th is that the struggle against racism and racial oppression is **not** a struggle against any particular race. It is not the struggle against White people. It is a struggle against an oppressive system, a degrading and dehumanizing system, a system which robs not only the victims of oppression of the humanity, but also dehumanizes those who exercise and implement that oppression. I shall try to weave these three themes into this address today, and hopefully something of some significance will emerge from that.

I want to stress, too, that we are not here as South Africans trying to be prescriptive or ascriptive to anyone or any community which is struggling against racism. Every community that has been the victim of racial oppression has its own specific and peculiar historical experience. And we do not claim



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to have any monopoly in terms of wisdom, in terms of knowledge, understanding of strategies and tactics. Everyone brings to the struggle against racism their own experience. And it is as important as ours and we respect it for that status.

### The 19th Century African World

At the conference held in the Prussian capital of Berlin in 1884 to 1885, the African continent was carved up and shared out as colonies and dependencies by the great powers of Europe in that period. After the Berlin conference, with the exception of two territories, Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, and Liberia on the West African coast, every other part of the African continent was governed by a colonial power. And African people had been deprived of the right of self-government. In the New World of the Americas and the Caribbean, at that time, the only independent country occupied by African people was Haiti where the Africans of the New World had seized their freedom from slavery by force of arms and defended that freedom in an epic protracted struggle which finally established Haiti as the first African Republic of modern times in 1803.

On the mainland in North America in United States, the Supreme Court in 1884 pronounced its devastating decision that the Voting Rights Act of 1875, which had been designed to secure the rights of the former slaves, declared that Voting Rights Act unconstitutional. The following year in 1885, that same Supreme Court pronounced its notorious *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision which sanctified the doctrine of separate but equal, thus setting the stage for constitutionally entrenched racist oppression in that country.

After numerous slave rebellions and uprisings, all of which had been very brutally suppressed, in 1885 slavery in Brazil was finally abolished. That same year, 1885, also marked the first Chumarenga in Zimbabwe (that was) also suppressed with sadistic violence with the superior arms employed by the mercenaries in the employ of Cecil John Rhodes British South African Company.

The last embers of arm-resisted colonialism in South Africa were extinguished in the war against Venda in 1898, one year before the outbreak of the Anglo World War (Boer War). And the Anglo World War has some significance for this country. Because if you visit Toronto, in one of your main boulevards there you'll find a whole number of monuments to Canadian soldiers who fought in the Anglo World War. A very significant war for the future of South Africa, it ended with a defeat of the Boer Republics. But it

was also one of the major milestones in the creation of the system of apartheid.

The commencement of the 20th century consequently found African people and people of African descent at home on the continent, and, in the Diaspora. With the exceptions I have already mentioned, commencement of the 20th century found all African people as subjects, ruled and dominated by colonial powers or White supremacist governments. As subjects and not citizens, Africans and people of African descent had no rights, whatsoever. But they did, however, have a number of obligations imposed upon them –obligations (toward) dominant White power structures and those to whom those White power structures had delegated some limited powers.

This was a situation not peculiar, of course, to African people in 1900. The people of India were in the same position, as were the people of many other parts of Asia. Malaysia, Indonesia. Even China, which somehow managed to defend its independence, had been reduced to a semi-colony with large chunks of that country controlled directly by concessionary powers, European and Japanese.

But that same year, 1900, also saw a gathering of eminent Africans from the Diaspora and from the continent, convened in the first Pan-African Congress, inspired in the main by the Africans of the Diaspora. Most prominently, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois. And that conference pronounced that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of “*the colour line*”. That is not a term that is much used these days. But the term “*colour line*” refers to the multi-faceted system of oppression and undisguised economic exploitation to which most people of colour were subjected to at the time. But it applied also, especially, to people of African descent and to Africans. And when we cast our eyes back over the 20th century, we can, with hindsight, today say that indeed the struggle to restore African sovereignty on the Mother Continent and to reclaim the human rights of African people of the Diaspora was one of the leitmotif of 20th century history.

Thus, when Nelson Mandela was sworn in as President of South Africa in 1994, that achievement was greeted with great jubilation in every part of the world. But for Africans and African peoples in every part of the world, that was an event considered their victory. It was considered primarily an achievement of African people and of people of African Descent. It was seen, and I think I am correct in saying this, it was seen by all African people as a crowning moment in a continuing struggle to restore their sovereignty and to reclaim

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their human rights. A struggle that they had waged for the past five centuries, since the commencement of the African Slave Trade in the mid 15th century.

## **Pan-African Character of the Struggle**

That struggle has always had a Pan-African character. Pan-African, not only in the sense that it involved the entire continent, but Pan-African in that it embraced all people of African Descent. And it is important in this context to note that the immortals of that Pan-African struggle include first names (such) as W.E.B. DuBois, from the United States, Marcus Garvey from Jamaica, George Padmore from Trinidad, Paul Robeson from the United States, C.L.R. James from Trinidad, Alphaeus Hutton from the United States. So the Africans of the New World have always occupied a very important place in that Pan-African struggle for the restoration of African sovereignty and the dignity of people of African descent.

It is important at this time that we recall these truths and these realities. Because it is that Pan-African effort that has made it possible for the African people to achieve what they have been able to achieve during the 20th century. And the greatest single achievement of the African people during the last century can be measured by the fact that in 1900 when DuBois and his colleagues met in London, there were not many amongst the leading statesmen of Europe, Japan, of the United States who would have blushed or even objected to being referred to as "Imperialists". They were very proud of the fact that they were Imperialists. And many of them proclaimed (it) quite loudly without embarrassment. But it is an index of how the struggles of the African people and other oppressed people throughout the world have (so) transformed the political realities and the political vocabulary used to describe those realities, that today the term "Imperialist" is considered a term of political abuse. And if any of us were to go into Washington and say to George Bush, "You damned Imperialist," I am sure they would probably – you would probably face a lawsuit.

In 1900, the then President of the United States, I think it was Teddy Roosevelt, would have said, "Yep, and proud of it, too." So would Kaiser Wilhelm. So would Queen Victoria. So would the Prime Minister of France. So would the Emperor of Japan and many others. They would have said, "Absolutely, I am an Imperialist." Today, they would not say that.

We and the struggle of the colonial peoples have changed that. Equally today, as Rocky Jones mentioned yesterday, the term "racist" is found objectionable, even by people who are racists. The term "White supremacist", no one embraces it willingly today, even those who are White supremacists. And even the numerous euphemisms that were devised to disguise White supremacy and White supremacism are no longer willingly embraced by those who subscribe and practice White supremacy.

## **Global Nature of Racism**

Yes, despite these victories, we cannot say that racism has disappeared from the face of the planet. Racism is not a form of oppression and intolerance confined to any single part of the world. Regrettably, it is an international phenomenon. And it is found in varying degrees, probably in every society in the world at present. It is not something that afflicts only African people or people of African descent. It afflicts Africans, it afflicts Asians, it afflicts people in the Australias, it afflicts aboriginal peoples here in North America and in South America. It afflicts minorities within Europe, some of European descent, some not of European descent.

During the first half of the 20th century, we also saw the abysmal depravity to which racism can lead when the Nazis systematically employed industrial methods of mass murder to wipe out 50 percent of the world Jewish population.

That unspeakable and unfathomable crime perpetrated with proverbial passion (and) efficiency (as) the scholar Hanna Errant reminded us, had been rehearsed many times over in the colonies by the leading powers of Europe. We had seen it enacted by the Belgians in their colony in the Congo where it is estimated something in the order of ten million people had been done to death through forced labour, mass killings and systematic brutality by the Belgian authorities.

It had been enacted by the Anglo European power that had emerged on the North American mainland in the United States in less than 200 years of wars of expansion and dispossession that led to the total destruction of entire indigenous nations, and the reduction of the Aboriginal peoples in what is today the United States to a tiny minority, confined to what are euphemistically called "reserves" or "reservations". It had been done by the Spanish, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the British. In the Caribbean where the indigenous nations of those islands had been totally exterminated to be replaced by African slaves whose descendants now are the dominant element in the populations on all those islands with



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the exception of Cuba. It had been carried out also by the British in Australia where the aboriginal people were literally hunted down like game in order to make room for settlers from Europe. And the immediate dress rehearsal for that unspeakable crime took place in Namibia where German troops commanded by Johann von Trotter virtually exterminated the Herero people for daring to defend home and hearth against a foreign aggressor.

And we might today say it is somewhat prophetic that amongst the German officers who perpetrated that crime in Namibia was the father of the man who was to become one of the most notorious Nazi leaders, the father of Herman Georing, serving under **Von Trotter** in Namibia.

### Coalitions and Alliances

In our five centuries of struggle against racial domination and racism, it is important to underscore that the African people and people of African descent did not wage that struggle alone or on their own. At every point in that struggle, African people on the continent and in the Diaspora have sought allies, helpers and have sought to build support of coalitions with others.

Many of the Nova Scotian African community here are the descendants of the so-called Loyalists, former African slaves who served under British colours including the American Revolution, as a means of purchasing their freedom. That ...the British Colonial authorities betrayed the covenant they had signed with those African slaves is another matter. The fact of the matter is that African slaves joined the British because the British promised them freedom. Had George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and others promise them freedom, I am certain they would have fought under the stars and stripes.

It happens that George Washington did not do that. He was a slave-owner himself, as was Thomas Jefferson. They had no choice. If you wanted freedom, you fought for George III. At least he promised you that. That was coalition building. The British then sold them out afterwards. That is another matter.

But in that also lies an object lesson for African people. The fugitive slaves who made their way across the Canadian border on the Underground Railroad to form the African communities of Ontario and other parts of Canada owe their freedom to a host of helpers and allies. In the first instance, to free Blacks and other fugitive slaves, you all know the names, Harriet Tubman and others. But also involved in the

Underground Railroad were many White Americans. Many Native Americans. And there of course also White Americans and fugitive slaves on the Canadian side of the border. The immortal John Brown who planned and tried to incite a slave rebellion in the slave-owning states that later constituted themselves into the Confederacy, was one amongst many White Americans who were prepared to lay down their lives for the freedom of African people in the New World.

So, too, in this day if we are to succeed in our struggle against racism, we must build unity, in the first instance, amongst ourselves as African people; but, at the same time, seek out allies and build effective coalitions with others, with other communities who are victims of racial oppression and racism, with other social, political and religious communities who are committed to the eradication of racism. I am not suggesting by this that if we fought alone we could not win. But I think we will win faster and more easily if we have allies.

### Conclusion

The people of Africa and their descendants are emerging from an extremely trying period of their history. But it is not as victims that we can aspire to the spring of our freedom. We must begin by raising our heads and shedding the psychology of victimhood, which can be as debilitating and sometimes even more debilitating than the oppressive racial domination to which we have been subjected. The question we need to ask ourselves, the question we need to pose for ourselves is, given that the nightmare of mass murder, enslavement, colonial domination and racial oppression, known by a number of different names, that the African people have borne over these past centuries, how is it that the African people have survived?

What was it that kept us going and inspired us with a determination never to surrender and just give up, curl up, die, commit mass suicide or something worse. What was it that kept us going?

And I would like to submit that we owe our survival as African people to three things. The first is an abiding and a profound faith in ourselves. A faith in our capacity to go into and live in the mouth of the beast from day to day and survive. To go into the mouth of the beast from Monday to Friday and the next week and the next month and the next year and the next decade, on and on. We had that determination. We were not going to give up. We had faith in ourselves. We must begin to decipher and to understand the various techniques to survive that we devised and the various tech-

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niques and cultural practices we devised to preserve and defend our humanity.

The second was the capacity for collective action. And that collective action assumed a number of forms. Many a time these forms of collective action had to be covert, subtle, hidden, underground. But they were there. At other times we could engage in overt collective action, explicit and open collective action. But we developed that capacity for collective action. And that is what enabled us to survive and to struggle.

Third, we evolved a capacity and a willingness to build and nurture ties of solidarity amongst ourselves and with others

so as to further the struggle for our liberation. And I think that that is the object lesson that we, as African people, must derive from our past five centuries of experience. And we must take those lessons, build on them and I am sure that if we build on these things, the spring of an African century shall surely evolve into a glorious African summer of freedom.

Thank you.

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## EMPOWERING STRATEGIES TO LINK THE DIASPORA

Dr. Ikael Tafari (*in absentia*)

Deputy Director, Commission for Pan-African Affairs, *Government of Barbados*

Read by Dr. Esmeralda M. A. Thornhill

My 20-minute intervention as part of a panel on *Building Global Strategies*, one of the major themes on the agenda of the International Symposium entitled “*Racism and the Black World Response*” will speak to the salient issue of building corridors of power between Africa and her diaspora, using the program of the Barbados Government’s Commission for Pan-African Affairs as a model. As spelled out in the Commission’s draft estimates document for 2001-2002, the strategic developmental thrust required from the Pan-African world in the present global era revolves around the following *seven major initiatives*:

1. **The establishment of international think tanks or lobbying institutions** comprising influential black thinkers, technocrats and institutions with a view to conceptualizing practical solutions to the fundamental developmental problems facing the peoples of Africa and the diaspora globally, along with lobbying for the implementation of such solutions.
2. **The setting up of Pan-African trade centres** under the aegis of the respective ministries of trade, industry and international business, both on the African continent and in the diaspora.
3. **The creation of direct airline linkages** between Africa and the African American, Afro Latin and Caribbean communities.
4. **The establishment of various joint permanent commissions for cooperation**, conceivably along the lines of the commissions on the Ghana-Barbados initiative dating back to 1999, allowing for greater collaboration between relevant government ministries on both sides of the Atlantic.
5. **The development of agro-business projects across the Pan-African world** based on the prototype of the commissions proposed by the Ghana-Barbados Agro Business Initiative. This envisages the establishment of agro-business cooperatives among Barbadian and Eastern Caribbean youth in the first stage, and ultimately reaches out to the goal of settling these young Barbadian farmers collectively on land in Ghana in cooperation with the Ghanaian authorities.
6. **Instituting youth community group exchange programs** using the model of the Commission’s proposed initiative with

South Africa. Such a venture offers the possibility of the exchange of personnel, technical assistance and educational resources involving both the private and public sectors of the various countries of the Pan-African world; and

7. **The general consolidation of Pan-African links** via the publication of newsletters, the launching of Pan-African public lecture programs, student and lecturers exchanges, the development of black cultural and entertainment industries and the setting up of a website across Africa and the diaspora that will stimulate the kind of international communication flows which are imperative, given the current information modalities of globalization.

It is our considered view at the Commission that the program outlined above offers important vistas for international networking among the people of Africa, at home and abroad at the highest level between governments as well as between non-governmental organizations.

Finally, it is a matter of note that much of the massive capital infusion needed to drive such a global developmental program could be well derived from the current international campaign for reparations for the black world. If successful, it would bring about an urgently needed redress of the dangerous imbalance in the world’s wealth via substantial technology transfers, debt cancellations and the instituting of new trade regimes more favourable to developing countries at the level of the World Trade Organization. This was cogently argued by the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, the Honourable Nia Motley, in her outstanding contribution to the meetings of the International Preparatory Committees for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism [held in South Africa in August 2001].

Barbados and the Caribbean as the leading historical crucibles of plantation slavery and colonialism, have a critical and redemptive perspective to bring to bear on this pivotal international agenda for the restructuring of the world economy as outlined above, which will shape the Emerging World Order of the 21st century, and thus decisively affect the destiny of our people for generations to come.

Thank you.

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## THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

Abigail Moriah

One-third of the earth's population, two billion people, are under 25. Young people everywhere are discriminated against, marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes at every level. The wealth of knowledge which youth can contribute is rarely recognized.

My goal is threefold. To argue for the benefits of involving youth in community processes; to describe existing vehicles [by which] youth of the African Diaspora and other youth of colour direct [their] participation in the struggle against racism at the local, national and international levels; and to outline possible strategies for linking youth of the African Diaspora at the local, national, regional and international levels. Primarily, I seek to demonstrate and argue for the importance of youth involvement [in the struggle against racism], discrimination and related intolerances. Likewise, the examples I provide are necessary foundations for the strategies that I suggest.

I begin this discussion with an argument for youth involvement. Although [the words] "for youth by youth" has become a catch phrase lately, the true value of youth-directed and youth-driven initiatives might not be recognized. Connecting youth of the African Diaspora is more than just creating spaces where these youth can meet and voice their concerns, share their experiences and learn from each other. [Connecting them] also facilitates [their] empowerment through involving them in these struggles. Such empowerment also enhances their individual development.

Just look at it this way. Youth involvement refers to the active participation of youth in, for example, the strategic development of methods to combat racism. Through active participation of youth in the symposium by way of entrusting its coordination to them, by facilitating youth workshops and by inviting youth to participate in panel discussions as organizers and children of the Diaspora, we are providing space whereby they can contribute. Such an opportunity encourages and permits youth to take responsibility, and hopefully implement selected strategies developed here. The empowerment gained from assuming responsibility



*Connecting youth of the African Diaspora is more than just creating spaces where these youth can meet. ...[Connecting them] also facilitates [their] empowerment through involving them in these struggles. Such empowerment also enhances their individual development.*

– Abigail Moriah

begins a process of youth development. This process of involvement, empowerment and development [then builds upon itself].

I'll look at some of the different examples I have noted [from this and other conferences]. I'll start at the local level with *Word Iz Bond*. Here in Halifax, young artistes have gotten together to form a collective of *Word Iz Bond*. As you are probably aware, this group of talented artistes performed conversations last night at the Highlife-Cafe. The collective also performed during this year's African Heritage Month celebrations in the Student Union Building of Dalhousie [University]. They presented *Word Iz Bond*, a night of Hip Hop and spoken word at the Grawood, Dalhousie University, and performed *Poetry in Motion* in the Renaissance at the Highlife-Cafe.

The awareness-raising work that *Word Iz Bond* has done in the student community and in the community at large in Halifax is tremendous. Notably, they have managed to link up youth from various black communities in Halifax. They have also connected youth of the African Diaspora that reside within Halifax. *Word Iz Bond* bridges generational and racial barriers. Persons who attend, participate in, and support this collective come from diverse social and economic [backgrounds].

We met together to actually develop the youth strategy, domestic strategy, and international strategy for presentation in Durban. One project we used was the listening project. This provided an example for participants to share with a small group their experiences, experiences of their peers,



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families, and ethno-religious groups related to racism, discrimination, and related intolerance. Participants learned of the impact of racism on other ethno-cultural and racial groups based on the stories they shared. Another exercise we used to develop international strategies was the Voices of Canada's Youth in Durban. Here, we identified different issues and themes to present at the international level.

Lastly, we used a Knowledge Cafe model. This was facilitated by Dominique Denarie of Denarie Resources in Ottawa. Briefly, what we did was to break into groups with people [we did not know before]. There were about eight different groups. By means of flip charts, each group identified different issues that we thought were really important. We then proceeded to elaborate on them. From there, we picked one issue which we thought was really key. We left that issue [on] the flip chart and then we moved around to different tables to further develop ideas and give different perspectives on why the [chosen] topic is key. We also thought about ways in which we could actually deal with the particular issue. After moving to three different tables, we came back to our own tables to solidify and summarise our perspective [on the issue], discuss it and present it in a plenary report.

The other example I'd like to use at an international level is America's Regional Youth Caucus. This was formed in December 2000 with the objective to propose youth demands in a concrete and concise way as part of the preparatory process of the WCAR. More generally, it seeks to employ methods to guarantee that progressive youth agenda from around the world will be taken into consideration throughout the WCAR Conference and afterwards in the follow-up implementation of the plan of action.

The America's Regional Youth Caucus advocates the creation of a viable tool for beginning a global dialogue amongst youth. The objective here is to provide young people a safe and open forum for discussion and for developing a sense of equality among them through establishing and building a global youth caucus.

Now, to some practical suggestions based on these [and other] experiences I've participated in and some of the people I've met and some of the things they participated in: first, the most important thing, I think, is to develop some sort of a think tank, youth collective, or coalition. I'll call it "think tank." By this means, youth who share common experiences and face similar challenges, such as Youth of

the African Diaspora, can meet to share ideas, experiences, exchange information, and provide support to each other, and solve problems with peers who understand their struggles.

The underlying purpose of this collective is to create a space for youth to develop ideas to bring about personal or social change. My idea modifies one from the Youth Helping Youth concept developed by the Canadian Mental Health Association for their youth wing, as a guide to starting a self-help group. I thought this is a good idea to adopt. It could be further developed by individuals who share the same vision and are willing to involve other youth. I believe that this is critical to the development of other tragedies by means of which youth could get together to brainstorm.

Another idea, which I already mentioned is Word Iz Bond. This is just to encourage greater support for events that they put on. I would urge people to actually try to participate in what they do.

Another one would be the scrapbook example developed by the America's Regional Youth Caucus. What they do is encourage youth to submit different art forms, literature, and things like that, that would reflect their experiences of racism, discrimination, and maybe some of the ways in which they dealt with it. The scrapbook is to be put together and presented at the conference in Durban later on this month.

The next one I would say is to link up youth through computers, through chat lines and things like that. An example of such web-based ideas is the "Blackplanet.com" through which a lot of youth participate right now. Such means could be expanded and used to deal with issues and current events that relate to our people and to the Diaspora. A related example is the Chinese website, the Harangue, which is used for connecting persons of Chinese descent of the diaspora. Such measures wouldn't necessarily cost a lot, and so would be affordable to young people.

Another practical means is a continuous sharing of information on provincial, national, regional, and international conferences. My own eyes were totally opened when I attended the Youth Forum in Ottawa in July. Through other opportunities that I have had, I realize that many



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other youth here in the province would love to have such experiences. The aim would be to keep the connections and the networks we actually make through the conferences so we can build upon them.

Then there are educational projects. That was one of the key areas we focused on in Ottawa. The question we pondered was how to spread information about the realities of racism in Canada and to evolved corrective curriculum for promoting such information in the schools. The March 21 campaign which is supposed to be revamped to focus on developing and sustaining an integrated year-round programming that highlights educational tools and materials could be of

good help in this direction.

Lastly the youth need support. We need support to find ways, and the encouragement to participate in events like this. And we need support and encouragement for our own activities too. The reason I presented these different ideas is that though we're youth and we have a lot in common, we have different interests and different talents. We need to look at different ways in which we can all become involved. And for these we need the support of the grown-ups.

Thank you.

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## EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE STRATEGIES

**Dr. Georgia Dunston**

Professor and Chair, Department of Microbiology, *Howard University*  
Director, *National Human Genome Centre*

**G**ood morning. I am very pleased to be here. And let me begin by thanking Professor Esmeralda Thornhill for inviting me to participate in this very historic symposium, *Racism and the Black World Response*. This is the first of its kind in our time. And I'm reminded of Mr. Jordan's conversation about the dynamics of the continuing struggle.

This Symposium is a significant event in that process. And each one of us is a part of history in the making. Our presence here today is not coincidental. Each of us brings with us a history that's tied to our presence here today.

I have been asked to address empowering healthcare strategies under our panel topic of *Empowering strategies to link the Diaspora*.

[The year] 2001 is not just another year on the calendar. This year, I like to say, marks the beginning of a new cycle of knowledge. And because it is 2000, I'll go so far as to say it's a cycle of knowledge that occurs, perhaps, in 2000-year periods of time. We are at the beginning of that new cycle. Significant to that cycle is the event published earlier this year in two of the leading scientific journals: the first draft of the entire sequence of the human genome, the blueprint for the human body. Both of these are landmark publications. Why? Because one publication in *Science* was led by Venter, who was highly supported by private monies. The second [publication] in *Nature* [of which] the senior author [is] Francis Collins, the Director of our National Human Genome Research Institute in the States. [These publications seek to ensure] that the knowledge coming out on the sequence of the human genome would go into the public domain and thus be available to the public.

The Genome Project started in 1990. The private concerns didn't really get interested until we were nearing the point where the market potential of the sequence data was clearly in view. And then they came in indicating that we can complete this sequence in shorter time with less money than the public [sector had projected].

The genome project has been the most ambitious and certainly the most expensive initiative supported by the public. Three billion dollars were set aside for [its] completion. The



***The health of an individual and the health of a community are directly related to what the individual and the community believe is the truth about who they are . . . - Dr. Georgia Dunston***

project's [aim] is to sequence the entire genome. [As I've already said], the information on that sequence was published earlier this year in those two journals. I'd like to show this slide ... it's pretty [and] ... elegant in its simplicity. This is just a segment of the DNA sequence showing you the double helix DNA – everybody knows about DNA after the OJ trial. So this is what a section looks like. This helical structure with the red connections here showing bases or nuclear ties. [It has] been estimated that there are about three billion of these bases in the whole human genome. The project has been [about determining] the order of each of these bases..

By definition, the human genome is the complete set of instructions that each of us receive at the time of conception for the construction and operation of the human body. All the information is there. One complete genome we get in the information from the sperm. The egg also contains a complete set. That's 23 chromosomes. When the sperm penetrates the egg [as] the first visible expression of our beginnings as individuals, we all start out as one cell with two complete sets of instructions. And every time that cell divides, it replicates its genetic information so that all of the subsequent cells get the same genetic information.

As [growth] occurs and we develop into these beautiful bodies that we like to pamper and, to some extent, unfortunately, worship sometimes, the cells of our bodies ... have been estimated to be trillions. When we look at our bodies and we see the diversity of cells – heart cells, eye cells, skin cells, you name it – they all have two complete sets of the entire genome.

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**Dr. Georgia Dunston...**

The diversity we see in the body appears to indicate that the genetic information would be different [for each cell]. But it's not. The information is the same. It's just that each type of cell plays that information or expresses that information differently. That leads to what we then call it, its phenotype, a heart cell, a kidney cell, an eye cell. But they all have the same complement of genetic information. So the diversity we see is not a diversity at the gene level. It's in the expression of the gene. Now, that becomes significant.

[In other words], the take-home point is simply this: the health of an individual and the health of a community are directly related to what the individual and the community believe is the truth about who they are and what they are. I will try to make this case through the human genome.

I like to begin by [saying] I believe that the genome sequence at this point in time is a gift through science to humankind. That's why I particularly like to appreciate the impetus for the public effort to make sure that the sequence is in the [public] domain, that it is a shared resource, that we all have access to the information. [This is] because, with the completion of the human genome sequence and its expression, comes a new knowledge base for biology and biomedical science. This is a knowledge base that is as old as the origins of humanity and as new as the most recent gene discovery.

This genetic material has changed over eons of time and yet, it has remained remarkably consistent in many ways ... This is a new knowledge base. At present, most of the information is focused on finding the estimated 30,000 genes that is in that human genome sequence. And a rather humbling number because when the Genome Project first started it was estimated that there were about a hundred thousand genes in the human genome. So it was humbling to get to this point and realize that the data suggests there are only about 30,000, which is only two, three times, a bit more than the genome of an earthworm. And in fact, I'm told, it is less than the genome of a tomato plant. [Therefore] it's not in the actual numbers, [the estimated] 30,000 genes that it takes to make a body and to operate it. It is going to be in the combinations and permutations [of those genes]. The challenge is to find those genes within this tremendous amount of sequence. I will go so far as to say at this point, too, that the amount of information that it takes to make those 30,000 genes is about ten percent of the sequence.

I want you to think about that a minute. Because what that says is this: *that about ten percent of the sequenced informa-*

*tion makes something we see. The rest of the sequence does not make anything that we see.*

A lot of that [unseen sequenced] information is about population history and it's also about human history. The Genome Project has taken us to the level of what we call DNA sequence-based biology. In order to do these kinds of studies, we need families and we need populations in order to find these genes and to understand what they do. ... I do call to your attention that the human genome is a shared resource. The individual genome is a subset of the family. And the family genome is a subset of the population.

So all the issues in medicine that usually deal with the individual are revisited for the family and the population. Issues of privacy or confidentiality and issues of discrimination have to be addressed at the family and the population level. You see, the Genome Project changes the paradigm. That sequence is four letters. It's the language of four letters. And it's only the order of those four letters that determine those 30,000 genes – what they make and how they function..

Four letters in this alphabet. It changes the paradigm where we are using variation as a tool for seeing. The sequence, with all the information, has four letters the essential characteristic [of which] is a variation. We have to learn how to decipher the significance of this variation. Variation has been used to construct the map, the human genome map. Variation is used to find the genes. Variation is used to understand what the genes do.

The genome is the one area of science where biology and identity come together. [This is] because the same sequence that determines the genes that make the body, is the unique sequence that distinguishes an individual from others. Each of our complete sequence is unique.

The Genome Project, first, gets our attention and our money because it says it's going to solve problems of disease. But the knowledge that is coming forth is really about biology and how living things operate. And that information is also in the genome. But for this group, I want to tell you, it's about identity.

The second event for 2001 that makes this a landmark year is the formal announcement and dedication of the National Human Genome Centre at Howard University [in] May of this year. This Centre has come into being to bring multicultural perspectives and resources to an understanding of



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human genome variation and its implications for health promotion and disease prevention. We know that health is more than the absence of disease. And my thesis is that human identity, individual and collective, is as important to promoting health as mapping genes is to preventing disease.

Our focus is on the African Diaspora. African people have been shown to have the broadest profile of variation in the genome. This is not anything surprising, because we know the history of human evolution is rooted in Africa. Africa has been shown by anthropology and archaeology to be the birthplace of humankind. The genome existed at that point.

The variation that occurs is change in the genome over time. The older a population, the more time, the broader the spectrum of variation. Variation is [what] we're using to map genes, to understand genes, to even define ourselves in relationship to each other and the rest of the biological world.

In summary, the human genome is a new knowledge base that, like no other area of science, gives information on human history. History ... is the link that makes order out of apparently independent events. It has been said that history is to the human race as memory is to the individual. If we forget, we cannot do very much. We call that amnesia. A people that is not knowledgeable about its history is lost in its identity. Identity is key to purpose. It is so important that at this point in time, all of the collective intellectual power that is resident in the African Diaspora comes together with new ways as to how we learn and share the truth about the history of who we are as a people.

The genome is a profile, not only of Human History, but of African History. *We must move it from it being history, or his story, to our story.* Our story will bring us into a con-

sciousness of our identity that is most empowering, because the most empowering entity we can have is a sense of purpose. And purpose flows from knowing who you are. We have unique contributions for humanity.

It's been said, and I don't think it's new to this audience, that Black people are spiritual people. In fact, one of the names of Africa is the land of spiritual people, I was told. It's also been said about our relationships to each other, our relationships to the whole, [that we are a] loving people. You've heard these things. When we come into contact with our history, we get the roots of our identity that's in our very genome. And we serve a purpose. We bring to humanity a consciousness of spiritual reality that is more powerful than anything we have dealt with, including nuclear energy. When we go this next leg of the journey, at the end of our exploring, we shall arrive where we began and know the place for the first time.

My last slide is 2001 – we're now at this conference... those of us who have been brought here at this time to answer [the] question [of our identity]. Will this be the year that the minds of African people change and that humanity is redefined in the Order of Life? The genome shows us that there's literally no difference between one individual and another. Certainly no differences that correspond to the reality that we have constructed in terms of our racial groups.

Every sequence, however, is unique. And we need to see what it's telling [us]: the genome brings us to the end of one era of thinking of ourselves. But it will be for us to determine whether or not it will also launch us into a New Beginning based on that new knowledge.

Thank you.

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## MOVING AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIA FORWARD

**Lynn Jones**

Eighth Generation Nova Scotian, Community, Labour and Political Activist

**G**ood Morning. I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak here not only for myself but on behalf of the many workers who have come before me, with me, and will come after me in the struggle for workers' rights and representation.

I would be remiss if I didn't speak of the people that have come before me in this struggle for human rights, workers' rights. I'm very proud to say some of them are in this room today ...

I want to share with you first, very quickly, one of the ways that I got involved in this struggle. I remember very clearly when I had the opportunity to join the federal government in Nova Scotia. My brother, Rocky ... learning of this great event [said] that I was now finally employed in a job that would last longer than a few months, and also that I would have the opportunity to be a member of a union. I remember also his excitement, because he did not have the opportunity to do that [job]. But at the time, I was wondering what this union thing was all about. Immediately on joining the workplace, I proceeded to seek out where the union [office] was, who was representing me as a worker in the trade union movement, and wanting to get involved.

I'm sure many of the other people who have been involved in the union went through a similar process. Whether we realize it or not, I honestly and sincerely believe that our struggle against racism, imperialism, xenophobia, cannot be won without the inclusion of workers and without the means to develop the rights of workers and their communities. If we fail to address workers' rights, then we'll not have the opportunity of really being able to participate in our total liberation.

As I share my story here, I see [in the audience] many of the brothers and sisters who are part of that story and helped me to become and to do what I was able to do. I acknowledge them

In the panel yesterday, Yvonne gave a synopsis of the Open Hearing on Racism held here in our very own Halifax, Nova Scotia, on March 21st, United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It was proclaimed "to invoke memory and confirm voices of experience."

I prepared myself for this very important event as if I, and I alone, would have the most horrific experiences to share



*I honestly and sincerely believe that our struggle against racism, imperialism, xenophobia, cannot be won without the inclusion of workers . . .*  
– Lynn Jones

about racism. I eagerly waited to tell how racism had affected me, particularly relating to the systemic discrimination that I was exposed to and was perpetuated against me during my time as a worker, an activist and a leader in the trade union movement in Canada.

I needed to tell my story to my African sisters and brothers in Nova Scotia. Especially, I wanted my Elders to hear [it] as they sat in their places of honour. I longed for their embrace, their encouragement, the nodding of their heads urging me on to tell my story.

For this very important forum, I knew I would find an honest and understanding place of solace from the mean, ugly world filled with lack of understanding and respect for who I was. I wanted to tell my story because I could no longer pretend I was [invincible]. Despite my strength in the face of adversity, I could no longer be strong inside. I could no longer encourage others when each day my inner strength was dissipating under all the attacks.

You see, I was convinced no other person could possibly relay to this court of eminent judges all of who looked like me, the depth and effect of overt and systemic racism [that I had] experienced as a result of union policies, programs, and activities. I thought I had faced and experienced every possible form of racism that racism had to offer. Hadn't workers of colour fought so that I would become the first African person in Canada to be elected to the Executive Committee and Council of the largest union in Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress? Wasn't I put there with the strongest of mandates to represent them locally, nationally, and internationally?



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[My membership at that level enabled us to] move on to accomplish other long overdue work. This included the historical cross-country tour of Canada to gather information and evidence of racism that exists within the Canadian Labour Movement. The tour culminated in a report of the Canadian Labour Congress, a national anti-racism Task Force Report called *Challenging Racism*.

It was shortly thereafter that myself and others charged one of the Canadian Labour Congress largest affiliates with systemic racism and discrimination. However, it was not time to do so. Suffice it to say there is no forum within the Canadian courts system for federal workers to collectively charge their unions with systemic racism and discrimination. That is the result of that part of the struggle.

Back to the Hearing: The day I was waiting for finally arrived. As each person began to tell their story, time and time again I heard of the high expectations people held for their unions because of their union's stated principles. But as they said, they were deeply disappointed and downright disgusted with the lack of response to the racism occurring in their daily lives. At the Hearing, educators, public service workers, lawyers, ministers, activists, health care workers all talked about the daily reality of either not finding work because of the colour of their skin, or of obtaining employment only to be harassed, alienated, or ignored [when they tried to seek the help of] the organizations, their unions, whose principles and goals were purported to protect them.

It was at that, Hearing I clearly understood, on a personal basis, how the global reality of racism against African people really struck home. I realized how my story, important as it was to me, must be the story of most African people living in Nova Scotia. It's the story of African people living throughout Canada. It's the story of African people living on the continent as well as those living throughout the African Diaspora.

Our struggles with employers for jobs, wages, safer working conditions, the right to join unions, the right to equity and equality even within our unions, are the same across the country, in every province, in every community. In the global economy, the struggles are the same around the world. Multinational corporations lay off workers and close up shop here in Canada and Nova Scotia to expand substandard factories and mines where they can get help from corrupt military governments which oppress workers and ignore fundamental rights in health and environmental safety.

These same corporations have been used to pressure governments into cutting social programs, labour and environmental standards, as well as undermining the power of workers to improve wages and working conditions.

The future of African people and the role of labour are intricately linked. We cannot separate the exploitation of working people from the exploitation of African people, Aboriginal people, and People of Colour. We must listen when our community demands a different kind of relationship with the labour movements and society in general.

In terms of some strategies, [I suggest that] citing racism in our unions means challenging our unions to no less standards than what we would do with our employers or other institutions. The unions must triple their efforts to fight direct forms of racism by addressing racial harassment and discrimination in workplaces.

Second, we must document and pursue cases of racism that occur within our unions and at our workplaces. Just as an aside, I can't begin to tell you how many people in this country have experienced racism within the trade union movement or in their workplaces. When they try to find avenues of redress, they do not find the representation or the support of their unions. They either quit their jobs, leave, or like many of us here, they are not even able to get a job to begin with.

Fighting racism means challenging governments to support organizations that are the voices of those who are marginalized. We must demand changes in the Canadian justice system which, at present, criminalizes young people from our community. It means creating internal leadership structures and staffing them more democratically, including changes in representation, inclusiveness, and integration of issues and ideas. It's a union's responsibility to find ways of maintaining and building the solidarity of its membership. We cannot afford to hold on to bureaucratic rules and procedures which shut out the voices of any parts of our community.

If there's a major issue that I leave with the Symposium today, it's that in our communities and in our community organizations, we continually talk about government and its being responsible and accountable to our communities in the fight to eradicate racism. In addition to that, I urge and ask us to listen also to the voices of the people in the trade union movements. In so doing, let us try to make those trade unions which are part of the multinational corporations responsible to address issues of racism within our communities.

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## QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

**SPEAKER** I have a question for Dr. Dunston. I was watching CNN the other day and noticed that there was some announcement about a group of scientists in the U.S. wanting to clone the first human within the next three months. What's your response to that and what would your response be with the eventuality of they being able to determine skin colour?

**SPEAKER** Are you sure it was in the United States? I remember a report on a first group – I thought it was England. At any rate, the issue is, what are my thoughts on human cloning. I think the issue of cloning, just like the issue of stem cell research, brings home to us that knowledge is not occurring in a vacuum and it forces us as a community of individuals to examine our value system and to really recognize that research generates knowledge but the application of that knowledge and how it's going to be used has got to be influenced by the society. Policies that go into effect as a consequence of research, is again an area that oftentimes minority populations have not been involved in.

I'm not trying to skirt your question. I'm just simply saying that my opinion about cloning is a personal one and not something that I'm espousing for everyone. As I'm saying each of us will have to make decisions about what we think is right for the society with regard to how we apply the knowledge. You're right. We will have, in very short order, all the genes defined. There are genes that influence skin colour. My whole point is that the way we think influences how we use knowledge. If we stay at our present frame of definition of who we are, what we are, why we are, I suspect that whoever finds that gene will make a mint just like the ones selling ... [all] kinds of skin lighteners and what-have-you, because of the value that society places on that particular characteristic.

So I just cannot stress that the genome is like a chip with genetic information. It also shows us the creative process, because that's what the genome does. It makes things. As we understand how genes operate, we will understand how to make things. Now how we use that knowledge will depend on our value system.

**SPEAKER** My name is Donald Mapp. And you are American, living in the United States. Is that right?

**SPEAKER** Oh! Yes. Yes, I am.

**SPEAKER** Sorry. I wasn't here. I didn't catch your

name. Now you flew in to Halifax, did you?

**SPEAKER** Yes, I did.

**SPEAKER** Did you have any problems with the immigration?

**SPEAKER** No.

**SPEAKER** You're all laughing. I don't think you read this piece about this American lady who was an ambassador all over the world and she's now a Professor at one of the big colleges ... in the States. On July 7<sup>th</sup> last year, she flew into Halifax with 26 other people on an invitation. [All the other people] were all white, she was the only Black. On the invitation from our government. Now I understand our government paid for everything.

Now when she arrived, she was harassed so by our immigration. She was in tears when one of the officials who, in my opinion, should have been there to welcome her, spotted her and rescued her. This is the piece ... It's been in our Halifax paper. Now remember, I'm telling you something. I'm the only Black man – I've only got grade eight – I'm the only Black man in Nova Scotia with no education that writes to the paper his opinion. Now I know Black people got three degrees. They won't write.

A Black lady from Halifax – I know her well, her family and everything – she calls me up one day and she says, "Don ... I've read your paper, your latest piece, and I congratulate you. You write well." I said, "Yes, I think so, with my limited education, grade eight." So we were talking and I said to her, "How come you don't write? Why don't you write? You have a college degree." "Oh no," she said, "I'm married. I got too much to do. But when I – so I hung up after awhile and I was telling my wife." My wife said to me, "The reason she doesn't write – it's like a lot of Black people here in Nova Scotia – because you have to put your name at the bottom of your piece. Once you put your name there, then everybody, white, that don't like what you write, don't like Blacks – and I get all kinds of them, crank calls, crank letters.

It doesn't worry me because I'm like a duck in a monsoon or whatever that worst storm is. The water just runs off my back ... you can give that to the lady.



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## Question and Answer Period...

**SPEAKER** You share with me the article on the burden of being Black in Nova Scotia and by Regina Cecilia Brown and it's Friday, July the 7th, 2000. Did you have a —

**SPEAKER** My question is ... But anyways, there was a bunch of Blacks from Nova Scotia who are in business, import or whatever, and she was talking to them. And they told her that she was being treated like a Black Nova Scotian ... I find when you put the questions and they're sensible, probing questions to a white man, he's got no answer for them and he gives up. But all I'm saying is, do all these Black people here — and most of them got more education than I have — when you run — here's what I do. When I been with Black people and I've gone to a store or whatever. And the Black person has been discriminated right to their face. They know it. You know what they do? They just walk out. Not me. I say, Where is the manager? They come running like cockroaches. And I get action. Thank you.

**SPEAKER** My name is Wilma Findlay and I am here representing the National Council of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service Workforce. This question is addressed to Lynn Jones. I'm going to address it to Lynn Jones because Lynn was one who taught me that we have to name our perpetrator. We have to name it for what it is.

What I'm getting at is this: in the Federal Public Service, which is about 135,000 employees strong, there are 17 bargaining agents. When the Federal Government says "bargaining agents," it [means] a collective of unions within those bargaining units. But they're called bargaining agents. As an employee of the Federal Public Service, in order for me to understand how I can and should become engaged as a Black person in the workplace, naming what I see as injustices in my workplace, I need to get an understanding of those relationships, those bargaining agent relationships within the workplace that work for me and how they are constructed.

So I would ask sister Jones if she could please identify some of those bargaining agents, who comprise the Public Service bargaining agents.

**SPEAKER** By the way, Wilma knows the answer to this ... One of the largest bargaining agents within the Federal Public Service is the Public Service Alliance of Canada of which I and Wilma and some others in this room are members. Keep in mind that the ... Federal Public Service Union represents something like 80 percent or 85 percent of the workers in Federal Government [service]. It is that union that we filed a

case of systemic discrimination and racism against. The reason for that is manifold. Within the Public Service, workers' voices are not being heard. Racism is rampant both in an overt and a systemic [way]. The workers who provide you with services such as unemployment insurance benefits, pension plan benefits, and who deal with charges of racism from the larger community [such as those who work in the] Canadian Human Rights Commission [are also] members of that union. Yet these workers who are members of that same organization with the public service have no means of challenging the racism and discrimination that exists within their own union.

There's no court right now [that] will deal with the issue. We went to the Federal Court of Canada to hear our case. They determined that they did not have jurisdiction to [it]. We went to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. But unions have special privileges in Canada and have the ability to settle issues without having to deal with the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

As I stated earlier — because I was a leader in the Canadian Labour Movement — it was felt that if I went and also challenged this system, there was a [greater] likelihood that we would win that battle. [But] as of yet, we have not been able to do that.

**SPEAKER** These forums are very important. As an elder told me just recently, [we] hear a lot of good speakers, a lot of important things are being said, but where is the meat? I think probably by the end of this conference, we're probably going to get to the meat of the issue of racism. One preacher told me recently, if we don't deal with the issue of racism on a spiritual basis, she's not going to talk about it, because racism is very spiritual. It's an evil spirit, but she said she wouldn't talk about it.

At the end of the day, [listening to] what Dr. Dunston [said about] the issue of values, I think that unless we, as a Black community start talking about the spiritual context of racism and the fact that it's an evil spirit ... we need to talk about it. I'm a Christian by faith and I thank God for that but I'm not trying to force my beliefs on anyone else. I'm just trying to say [that my faith] gives me peace. If the day after tomorrow, I was caught downtown and my throat would be slit, the reality of my mortality looking in my face [would not take away my peace].

I think we all need to walk away from this forum ... asking



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## Question and Answer Period...

the question of ourselves that if you're not willing to die for the issue of liberating ourselves [from] racism, then we probably should make the decision that you shouldn't be around this table. I talk about death to my girls sometimes. I say, If daddy is not here and mommy is not here, they have enough strength built within them right now – it's not built with the hands of mommy and daddy. It's built on a spiritual foundation that says that there's another place.

And the reason that I [mentioned the issue of death] is that when you talk about values, you really come down to the bottom line that is about what we believe in this forum. What do we believe? What are your beliefs? And whether I agree with your beliefs or not, we still have to talk about it.

I want to challenge us as participants in this symposium here to get down to the bottom of this: after tomorrow this is all over. Are we willing to keep moving this forward [beyond tomorrow]? Because at the end of the day, I don't think it's a Black problem. I don't think it's a white problem. I think racism is a human problem. Thank you.

**SPEAKER** I really appreciate what you said. I think it is important, as you recognize, that to solve the problems that are facing us on all of these issues. I took health. Health was my area. We see the disparities in health. We see the disparities in the States between minority, African Americans in particular, and the majority. In the Developing World we see the disparities in health. These disparities are a Black response to racism. And what I heard you saying and what I would really like for folks that have come to this conference to think about is what we believe the truth is about ourselves. We've been taught, we've been programmed to dislike being Black such that if we learn how to make Black white, we would be the

first ones trying to do it because of how we have [been taught]. ... It is true. It is our story. Now we have to use all of the avenues at our disposal – whether it's poetry, whether it's theatre, whether it's art, all the things the young lady said. We have to tell our story because the only antidote to racism is the truth. And when we believe the truth about who we are, the truth is, truth has its own health plan.

I mean our diseases cannot be un-separated from what we believe about ourselves because we have been so created that we are creators. We create our realities and that's a power that we're going to see more and more. So we can't take it lightly. I hope when we leave this conference we will ask, what do we believe? And about belief – I consider science almost like a Thomas Ministry. It's almost like a requirement, Give me something I can touch, I can feel, I can see. But the story doesn't change after you touch, feel it, and see it. You then still have to believe the truth that you cannot touch.

I think it's very instructive that 90 percent of the sequence of the human genome does not make anything we see. Most of it is invisible. We don't know what that is. Ten percent of what the sequence makes is the body. Perhaps it might just be that this ten percent is for the expression of the 90 percent that cannot be seen. And it's something to think about. How can we change the script that we program ourselves to create? And if we change the script with the truth, then we have to express the truth. And the truth is that health is built into the mechanism when it believes the truth.

Thank you.

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## CLOSING KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

### TRANSFORMATIVE PROMISE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:

### HUMAN GENOME RESEARCH AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES

**Dr. Georgia Dunston, Ph. D.**

Department of Microbiology and the National Human Genome Center, *Howard University College of Medicine*

#### ABSTRACT

As the awesome technological feat of sequencing the human genome nears completion, the more daunting task of deciphering the genomic text (i.e., the language of life) is just beginning. The emergence of the Human Genome Project at this juncture in the evolution of Western science is not only impacting the way we view biology, but also how “we do” biology. Community education in genome science is the most compelling and potentially the most transformative challenge to 21st century science and society. DNA sequence data coming forth from the Human Genome Project challenges prevailing constructs of human populations, which partition humanity into bounded ethnic and/or racial groups. Because natural variation in the human genome is the ultimate measure of biological relationship, it is a determinant of individual, family, population, and human identity. The Human Genome Project is unique among the leading edge sciences in having as part of its initial core, a component to anticipate and address ethical, legal, and social issues emanating from the advancement of knowledge gained from the science. Because of inherent variation in the genome, the Human Genome Project challenges science to expand, (i.e., make more inclusive) the context or measure of Humanity in order to better understand the content of human biology. The Human Genome Project is forcing a paradigm shift in biology from the phenotype to the genotype, or from an “outside” to an “inside” view of biology and life. The transition from structural genomics to functional genomics focuses less on sequencing and more on understanding the significance of sequence variation. The importance of population variation in the genetic diagnosis, treatment and management of complex diseases cannot be marginalized or ignored. The population that is used as the reference to locate abnormal (i.e., mutations) and natural variation (i.e., polymorphisms) is relevant to the identification and proper application of information emerging from DNA sequence variation. The African American genome is perhaps the most comprehensive single population resource for exploiting DNA sequence variation in the genetic dissection of complex diseases. As medicine becomes increasingly more customized, made-to-order, “designer” medicine, a more refined definition of the individual and population-based disparities in health will be required.

#### Introduction

Let me begin by acknowledging the Nova Scotian Black Community for this unprecedented International Symposium on “*Racism and the Black World Response*”. The timeliness of this Symposium is observed in both its commemoration of the *United Nations’ Third Decade Against Racism and the UN International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance*. I am truly honored to participate in this historic gathering and sincerely thank Professor Esmeralda Thornhill and other organizers of this Symposium for the invitation and opportunity to come and share thoughts with you this evening on the implications of human genome research for minority health



*I am convinced that the active participation of Communities of Color in general, and African people in particular, will be a major factor in whether knowledge gained from sequencing the human genome will contribute to widening the gap or eliminating national and global health disparities between socio-economically and politically advantaged and disadvantaged people.*

– Dr. Georgia Dunston

issues: the potential benefits of genetic research in improving health and health care.

#### Human Genome Knowledge Defining History

For anyone who does not yet know it, let me state upfront that 2001 is not just another year on the calendar. While it is indeed the beginning of a new millennium, it also marks the beginning of a new two thousand year cycle of knowledge in the earth. Knowledge that challenges each of us, individually and collectively, to think about how we define ourselves, and the relevance of this definition to the health of our bodies, the integrity of our community, and the stability of our world. The year 2001 is a defining moment in human history, characterized by a new knowledge base for meeting the challenges of disease and unraveling the mysteries of life. This is the year when the first draft of a completed sequence of the 3.1 billion parts of the human genome was published in the scientific literature and made known to the public. A time when humankind is gazing inquiringly upon the magnificence of its own genetic blueprint and beginning to exploit the knowledge encoded in the genome to find the genetic causes of diseases and unmask the science of gene genealogy – the ultimate biological measure of human and population history, and molecular evolution.

During this time I would like to challenge you to think with me about the knowledge gained from the Human Genome Project (HGP) and from research on human genome sequence variation, and the relevance of this knowledge to our understanding of ethnic differences and disparities in disease susceptibilities and expression. The objectives of my presentation are threefold:

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- To define what the human genome is;
- To describe how new knowledge gained from the HGP is transforming biology and biomedical science in the 21st century, and
- To discuss why African people must be informed and involved in the genome revolution.

Knowledge gained from the HGP and research on DNA sequence variation reveals, perhaps like no other advance of western science, the inextricable link of biology and identity to health and disease.

### Significance of Genomic Knowledge

The significance of the HGP for humankind ultimately must be examined in the light of its impact on public health. Because society will be transformed by the exploitation of new knowledge gained from explorations of the human genome, it is imperative that such knowledge be communicated to *all* communities to ensure democratization of the benefits of genetic research for disease prevention, health promotion, and the elimination of disparities in health between majority and minority populations. For, informed, educated, and activist communities are the stakeholders who will ultimately determine if the billions of dollars expended in sequencing the human genome will usher in the promises of a new era of human liberation from the tyranny of chronic debilitating diseases and a greater understanding and respect for the place of humankind in the order of Life.

The timeliness of this International Symposium on *Racism and the Black World Response* is underscored by its focus on the history and reality of “how we define ourselves” as critical to any actions geared towards Black Community empowerment, capacity-building, and collective strategizing. The organizers of this Symposium have shown great insight in planning a program that recognizes the sobering implications of how knowledge gained from human genome science is impacting society in general and minority health issues in particular. Because so much of the current attention in human genome research is focused on the technological feats of sequencing, I especially appreciate the recognition and attention that this Symposium directs to community education on genetics research and its relevance to the health of Black people. As stunning and awesome as is the sequencing of 3 billion nucleotides in the human genome, community education in genome science is the most compelling and potentially the most transformative challenge to 21st century science and society. It is the *expectations* and *accountability* of informed and educated stakeholder communities that will serve as both catalysts and road maps –

They will determine whether the billions of research dollars expended in sequencing the human genome will herald an age of freedom from disease, disability, and death due to complex diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease – OR whether the HGP will be remembered as the most expensive, self-promoting and exploitative venture in the history of Western science and technology.

### Importance and Potential of the Human Genome

In addressing the topic of *Collective Strategizing* from a health perspective, I want to focus your attention on the potential benefits of genetic research in improving health and health care by underscoring the links between human genome research, self-knowledge, and racial minority health issues. In my opinion, the formal beginning of the United States Human Genome Project in 1990 represents a defining moment in Western science and human history. My reasons for making this bold affirmation are two-fold. First, the HGP, perhaps like no other leading edge of Western science, **challenges scientists to expand, and make more inclusive, the context or measure of humanity, in order to better understand the content of human biology.** Second, with regard to the human story or history, sequence data emerging from the HGP directly challenges prevailing constructs of human populations which traditionally partition humanity into bounded ethnic and/or racial groups. At this, the dawn of the 21st century, the HGP has extended the probing of biomedical science to the ultimate level of biological identity, that is unique DNA sequence variation. Moreover, exploration of the human genome has introduced new prospects for understanding molecular processes underlying disease and disease susceptibility. Attention is now focused on DNA sequence variation and the challenges inherent in distinguishing sequence variation of biomedical interest (i.e., mutations) from the tremendous amount of natural variation (i.e., polymorphisms) of biological interest. Because natural variation in the human genome is the ultimate measure of biological relationship, it is a determinant of individual, family, population, and human identity. Studies on DNA sequence analysis already show that populations differ in the frequency of both mutations of biomedical interest and polymorphisms of biological interests. Thus, the population that is used as the reference to map mutations and polymorphisms becomes very relevant to the identification and proper application of information emerging from DNA sequence variation.

Let me direct your attention for a moment to the historic and evolutionary significance of completing the human genome sequence for humankind. I say historic, because completing the human genome sequence marks this moment in history



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as the ceremonial beginning of a new era of biomedical science, genomic medicine and the paradigm shift in biology to DNA-sequence-based diagnosis and prevention of disease. I say evolutionary because, with the completion of the human genome sequence, comes a new knowledge-base for biology and biomedical science. A knowledge base that is as old as the origins of humanity and yet as new as the most recent gene discovery. This knowledge base connects all life and has the capacity to transform our most basic concepts of self and human identity. Thus, sequencing the human genome is not only applicable to biomedical science in the identification of genes of both clinical and non-clinical interests, but also to more fundamental questions of human identity and integrity. One of the major implications of human genome research for racial minority health issues is its potential impact on how we define ourselves.

The human genome is unique in that it is the fundamental level and expression of life. It contains all the information required for the construction, assembly, and operation of the human body. Thus it is both a type of “*Manufacturer’s Handbook*” and “*Owner’s Manual*”. Because the genome exists in all nucleated cells of the body and the body is encoded in every genome, the genome and the body are inextricably one. The human genome is not only the most complex information system known to mankind, but also an unfathomable communications system, in which the four-lettered DNA sequence code is translated into “flesh” and dwells among us, as us. As the “*Book of Life*”, the genome contains the record of every human being that ever was and is and will ever be. It encodes both the laws of Life and of Creation. The knowledge contained therein is indeed unique. One wonders if science is not the instrument for revelation of this knowledge in our time. The sequencing of the human genome has shifted the orientation of human knowledge from the outside appearance of things to the inside reality of life expressed at the molecular and cellular, or microcosmic levels. The HGP project also shifts the definition of humankind from a population-based to a DNA sequence-based science. The characterization of DNA sequence variation in the human genome is not only applicable to human biology, but also to human identity.

The most salient feature of human identity at the sequence level is variation. Human genome sequence variation dispels the myth of a majority. At the level of the genome, every genome is unique; **the norm is variation not uniformity, and the norm is best defined as a range of variation.** As medicine becomes increasingly more customized and tailor-made to measure, and designer-driven, a more refined definition of humanity and the individual will be required. It

remains to be determined how DNA sequence-based knowledge of self and group identity will impact minority health issues. Biological anthropologists and population geneticists are already mining the rich resources of natural variation in the human genome to reconstruct population history. Although no known biological product is encoded by much of the natural variation in the genome, it is nonetheless transmitted from generation to generation through the genome much like the genes that code for proteins, the functional products of genes. Natural variation in DNA sequences is a very rich source of information on family and population history. The results of research in areas of molecular evolution on gene genealogies in human populations are challenging old ways of characterizing racial and ethnic groups, which traditionally have been based on phenotypic, linguistic, and/or cultural differences. Anthropologists have estimated that less than 1% of the total gene pool code for the phenotypic characteristics widely used in the western world to classify human populations. In other words, the genes for physical appearance, such as skin color, eye color, and hair texture are an extremely small fraction of the approximately 3 billion nucleotides that make-up the human genome. If DNA sequence-based biology is to be science driven, then scientists and the general public must better understand the public health significance of the vastly greater stretches of unexpressed DNA sequence variation. The genome era is also forcing a paradigm shift in biology. A shift that is not just a change, but rather a transformation in the way we define ourselves; the way we see ourselves; the way we see our world, and how we see ourselves in relationship to our world.

## The Human Genome and Racial Minority Communities

As an African American woman trained in the discipline of Human Genetics, I am aware of the narrow, Eurocentric context in which much of human biology has heretofore been cast, and of the history of exploitation and exclusionary practices of Western science and biomedical research practised in Communities of Color. As part of the African American Community and a member of the Academy, I am convinced that the active participation of Communities of Color in general, and African people in particular, will be a major factor in whether knowledge gained from sequencing the human genome will contribute to widening the gap or eliminating national and global health disparities between socio-economically and politically advantaged and disadvantaged people. I am therefore committed to realizing the benefits of genetics in public health and to the importance of connecting research, education, practice and community.

While the alleviation of disease is the prime motivation for the HGP, my emphasis is on the implications of human

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genome research for racial minority health issues. If health is recognized as “more than” the absence of disease, then human genome research must go beyond a focus on disease to a greater understanding of the “more than” implicit in health. Because an individual’s concept of identity frames his or her reality, I hypothesize that the study of disease in individuals and between groups cannot be uncoupled from an individual’s and/or group’s concept of identity. Studies of DNA sequence variation challenge the truth of perceived and believed links between human identity and biology inculcated in Western culture. The social implications of uncoupling individual and group identity from biology are enormous. It remains to be determined whether attention to emerging knowledge of DNA sequence variation may effect a paradigm shift in our understanding of individual and group identity. Knowledge gained from the human genome is unique in its capacity to unshackle or liberate science and society from constructs of biology, that are themselves predicated on a very limited and incomplete picture of the human identity. If sickness and disease result from an incomplete and distorted concept of human identity – then it remains to be determined whether wholeness and health would ensue after a more comprehensive construct of biology based on more complete knowledge of the human genome.

It is now, that the world is challenged to close the gap in health status among different segments of humanity. **There is indeed much to be learned, when we set about /start viewing human variation as a gift and not an aberration.** It is noteworthy that knowledge of population differences in profiles of variation in the human genome, coupled with knowledge of the broader spectrum of natural variation in the genome of African peoples, underscores the critical importance of the population reference in human genome research. Understanding the “language of life” encoded in DNA sequence variation is indeed the brave new frontier of whole genome science, genomic medicine, and public health. Genomic research in African peoples offer unique resources for understanding human genome variation. **Because the African American genome brings together the depth and breadth of DNA sequence variation resident in the oldest African populations with more evolutionarily recent profiles of variation found by admixture with Europeans and Native Americans, the African American genome is perhaps the most comprehensive single population resource for exploiting DNA sequence variation in the genetic dissection of complex diseases.**

## Genomic Research in the African Diaspora

Let me move towards my conclusion by commenting briefly

on Genomic Research in the African Diaspora, commonly referred to as GRAD. This is a concept for human genome research initially proposed by investigators at Howard University contemporaneously with the beginning of the First Five Years (FY 1991-1995) of the U. S. Human Genome Project. GRAD focuses on DNA sequence variation as the foundation of biology and biomedical science. The long-range goal of GRAD is to improve the health status of African people through research on DNA sequence variation and the application of knowledge gained from research to better understand the biomedical significance of gene-based differences already known to exist among populations in immune response to organ transplants, susceptibility to diseases such as diabetes, sensitivity to drugs, cancer, and the influence of environment on health. GRAD provides the research foundation for the newly formed National Human Genome Center at Howard University in Washington, DC, USA. The purpose of this National Center is to bring multicultural perspectives and resources to an understanding of human genome variation and its implications for health and life. Our mission is knowledge driven – to explore the science of and teach the knowledge about DNA sequence variation in the causality, treatment, and prevention of diseases common in African Americans and other peoples of the African Diaspora. By addressing population variability in the human genome, the NHGC brings a depth perception to the linear perspective of human biology. The implications of this more enriched construct of human biology in improving health and health care will be determined, not so much *by the science*, as *by the scientists*, and, not by scientists *in isolation* but *in Community*.

## The National Human Genome Centre

The NHGC seeks to enhance the quality of life for Americans by improving the health status of ethnic groups and/or populations who bear a disproportionate burden of the disease in our racially stratified, hierarchical society. Research at the NHGC is designed to engage and empower individuals in community to probe questions about human identity and relationships in ways that explore genomic links between constructs and concepts of human identity and the expression of health and disease in individuals and communities. The ethical, legal, and social implications of decisions informed by such knowledge are enormous and will impact public policies at all levels of life. Research at the NHGC forces discussion of public policy issues on the proactive participation of individuals in promoting health of the body and community. Towards this end, the GRAD is an important beginning in bringing African and people of the African Diaspora from diverse disciplinary perspectives together in and with Community, to examine and assess plans geared to procuring



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comprehensive reference resources for collaborative research on human genome variation. Because African Diasporic populations include the depth and breadth of human DNA sequence variation, these populations provide the most comprehensive resources for exploiting DNA sequence variation in gene mapping and the genetic dissection of complex diseases.

### Conclusion – A Scientific Revolution in Knowledge

Let me conclude by stating that humanity is in the midst of a scientific revolution in knowledge about human history and biology, knowledge that shifts the focus from the phenotype or external appearance of things, to the genotype, the internal view of life. One of the most sobering lessons of the human genome is that our knowledge of human biology and potential is distorted by extreme limitations. It is as if our expressed desires to heal our bodies, our Communities, and our world cannot be achieved at our present level and state of knowledge. We need a paradigm shift, a different system of explanations, a whole new way of thinking about who we are and our relationship to ourselves and to each other.

In some ways, our times are akin to the days when humankind thought that the Earth was the center of the universe. The truth of this thinking was confirmed by anyone on Earth who could look into the heavens and see the sun rise in the Eastern sky and make its way across the heavenly orb to settle down in the Western sky. This was plain for all to see, the sun revolved around the Earth and Earth was indeed the center of the universe. With developments in optics, powerful telescopes were made which increased humankind's capacity to peer into the heavens and study the movement of the sun and other objects in the sky brought into view with the telescope. Astronomers studying the movement of objects in the sky soon recognized inconsistencies in their calculations when the position of Earth was placed in the center of objects in the sky. Galileo, a 16th century astronomer and physicist, is credited with using science to show that inconsistencies in the calculations of the movement of objects in the sky could be resolved if, instead of placing earth in the center, the sun is positioned in the middle with the Earth revolving around it. To say that Earth was not the center of the universe and the sun occupied this central place was, at that time, considered heresy by many in the Church, the Authorities on Truth.

Nonetheless, the facts supporting the heliocentric construct of the world held center stage until advances in space travel allowed humankind, once again, to extend the boundaries of our knowledge and we began to scan the outer limits of our solar system, with science now revealing new facts and data about the design of the world and raising questions about the

place of humankind in it. It should be noted that a more complete knowledge of Earth's orbit around the sun was essential and fundamental to humankind's growth and unfolding capacity to plot trajectories that later allowed us to fulfill our dream of space travel from the Earth to the Moon. The increase in knowledge brought by travel to the outer limits of Earth's solar system once again challenged humankind's view of our solar system as the only sun in the heavens with its orbiting planets and their orbiting moons. A more complete and enhanced knowledge of the heavens revealed that Earth's solar system is just one of many galaxies all with their suns, planets; and it moves in orderly, clockwork fashion through space. We now know that not only does our galaxy not exist alone in the universe, but rather, that at the extremes of observation, it appears as if new galaxies are being continually born and that the universe is alive and unlimited!

The impact of knowledge that our galaxy is not alone in the heavens and that humankind may not be alone in the universe has challenged our thinking about who we are as humans and the relationship of how we define ourselves to the stability of our world. In the last millennium, humankind explored space, the limits of our perceived outer world. Now, at the dawn of a New Millennium and the complete sequencing of the human genome, humankind is poised on the thresholds, ready to explore and discover *the limits of our perceived inner world*. Representing the fundamental knowledge- base of biology (i.e., the science of life), could it be that such knowledge provides fresh perspective now for novel paradigm shifts in our knowledge of life and our place and relationship in it? Could it be that more complete knowledge about knowledge is required for humankind to fulfill our desires for health and healing of our body? Is life so constructed that there is a relationship between what we think about and what we create? If knowledge is structured in awareness, what relationship does our increasing awareness of our *outer* and *inner world* have to the desires of our hearts? The year 2001 is defined as the end of the beginning of a new era in science, ushered in by the revelation of more complete knowledge on the construction and operation of the human body. We can only wonder if such knowledge will provide the foundation for better understanding, health, and elimination of diseases of body and mind.

Consider for a moment if racism is cast or characterized as an infectious and deadly disease that kills oppressor and oppressed alike, a disease that is rooted in erroneous thinking and false beliefs about who and what is the true nature of humankind's inherited identity and inheritance....How then might racism be properly characterized as a "crime against humanity"? And, if crime is defined as a violation of the law,

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racism then is guilty of being an egregious violation of the Law of Life that causes oppressor and oppressed alike to live so far below the Truth of identity that the crime itself is punishable by death. Can a more complete knowledge of human identity revealed from the inner perspective of the human genome change humankind's awareness and thinking about our body and its place in the Order of Life? Could it be that this International Symposium on *Racism and the Black World Response* is demonstrable of and fundamental to a new way of thinking and believing about who we are as humankind? Is the cure to racism rooted in this more complete knowledge of

the Truth of human identity and potential? If sickness and disease are inextricably tied to disease and death, is healing and health also linked to knowledge and thinking that are in harmony with the Law of Life? Do we need a whole new paradigm shift in our understanding of the relationship of how we define ourselves to the health of our bodies, integrity of our Communities, and stability of our world? Will 2001 be the year that the mind of humankind was changed and humanity redefined itself in the Order of LIFE?

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# International Communication

Tuesday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001

## THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF INDIGENOUS PYGMY WOMEN OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

### LES FEMMES DES POPULATIONS AUTOCHTONES

Le peuple autochtone partout dans le monde est privé de ses droits et en particulier en République Démocratique du Congo (RDCongo). Bien que reconnu comme premier occupant, il demeure la communauté inconnue, oubliée, discriminée, marginalisée dans le monde en général et en RDCongo en particulier.

La femme de cette communauté en particulier souffre de l'inégalité en dignité et en droit. Elle est discriminée, marginalisée et oubliée et par son mari ainsi que par la société et sa soeur non-pygmée. Elle est la femme la non instruite, mendicante, esclave etc... Elle est traitée de sorcière, bouffonne. En RDCongo la femme de population autochtone n'a pas de droits, elle n'a que des devoirs, elle est traitée de tous les maux, des tous les abus, exploitée par la population non-pygmée en général.

La situation de guerre en RDCongo la rend plus malheureuse que jamais. Chassée de son milieu naturel bien avant la guerre, elle erre en compagnie de ses enfants et son mari à travers les villages non pygmées; or, elle n'est ni acceptée par le pouvoir légal ou rebelle qui ne pense pas à elle comme si elle n'a pas droit à vie, à la terre, à la propriété, à la gestion de la chose publique. Voilà d'où vient sa difficulté à s'intégrer.

Dans les territoires sous contrôle rebelle, elle est maltraitée par le non pygmée qui ne la tolère pas et ne peut pas regagner son espace vital d'où elle a été expulsée par le pouvoir et qui est occupé par les milices et bandes armées "Nterahamwe et Mai mai".

Dans la poursuite par l'APR et les soldats du Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) des groupes armés, la population autochtone pygmée en général et la femme en particulier est si elle n'est pas tuée, elle est victime des traitements cruels, inhumains et dégradants et de tortures de toutes formes sous prétexte qu'elle héberge l'ennemi et se comporte en éclaireur ou en féticheur.

Dans ce troisième millénaire les femmes d'autres populations ont évoluées en tout et pour tout. Aujourd'hui il y a des femmes Présidentes, Ministres, Ambassadrices, Docteurs, Professeurs, Enseignantes, Commerçantes etc... Au contraire, les femmes des populations autochtones pygmées demeurent analphabètes, esclaves, mendiants, domestiques, oubliées etc... Elles n'ont pas droit ou accès à l'instruction, aux soins de santé, à la terre, à la ville comme à la forêt, à aucun des postes énumérées plus haut.

Victimes d'expropriation de leur espace vital, de l'inacceptation par le non-pygmé, elles sont encore des déplacées de guerre qui jouissent d'aucune assistance humanitaire.

### RECOMMANDATIONS

1. Que la communauté internationale fasse pression sur les États pour qu'ils respectent et reconnaissent aussi les droits et libertés des populations autochtones en général et des femmes des population autochtones en particulier.
2. Que la communauté et les ONGs internationales renforcent les capacités et les initiatives de groupes oeuvrant avec les peuples autochtones et singulièrement avec les associations féminines des peuples autochtones.
3. Que l'ONU fassent pression pour que les instruments juridiques internationaux en rapport avec les peuples autochtones pygmées soient mis en application.

*Madame Adolphine Muley  
L'Association pour l'émancipation de la femme  
autochtone pygmée*



## Principled Statement of Position Against Racism

**WHEREAS** in Nova Scotia Racism is psychologically and physically painful;

**WHEREAS** Racism is pervasive, relentless, and geographically divisive;

**WHEREAS** Racism denies our existence and our contributions to Canadian society;

**WHEREAS** Racism wreaks destruction on the social and spiritual fabric of our communities and families;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. We condemn Racism as violent, criminal, immoral and repressive.**
- 2. We demand actions of redress on all these fronts.**
- 3. We demand the eradication of Racism.**

**We, the undersigned, endorse the above *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*:**

*The **Principled Statement of Position Against Racism** was ratified and opened for endorsement at a Town Hall meeting held on February 11th, 2001 in East Preston, Nova Scotia. Since its ratification, more than 400 persons have signed this Nova Scotia crafted instrument.*



## NGO Instruments

### Oath of Good Health and Long Life

WE CHOOSE  
to empower ourselves, our families and our community.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES  
to work together, to heal together and to advance together.

WE PLEDGE  
to nurture ourselves, through the nurturing of others.

WE PLEDGE  
that our children will be guided to live on purpose,  
and in knowledge of themselves.

WE PLEDGE  
to forgive ourselves if we should falter,  
and promise to rise again to greatness.

WE COMMIT  
our bodies, minds and spirits to the  
rebuilding of our lives in our own images.

WE REPRESENT  
the abundance of life in health, wealth, love and joy.

*We embrace this position and accept responsibility  
in the active presence and power of the CREATOR,  
on this 21st Day of March 2001.*



# La déclaration des principes et des priorités d'Halifax

Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse  
le 5-10 août 2001



La *déclaration des principes et des priorités d'Halifax* a été adoptée le 10 août 2001 lors du symposium international sur le racisme, "*Le racisme et la riposte du peuple noir*" auquel ont participé environ deux cents délégués du Canada et de l'étranger. Halifax est le "berceau de la communauté noire autochtone du Canada" et constituait par conséquent le lieu tout indiqué pour ce rassemblement. Le symposium, organisé sous les auspices de la **Chaire James Johnston Robinson d'études noires canadiennes** de l'Université Dalhousie, commémorait la *Troisième Décennie des Nations Unies* contre le racisme. Cette rencontre venait en prélude à la *Troisième Conférence mondiale contre le racisme, la discrimination raciale, la xénophobie et l'intolérance qui y est associée (WCAR)* tenue sous l'égide des Nations-Unies en août 2001 à Durban en Afrique du Sud.

Deux documents élaborés en Nouvelle-Écosse viennent compléter la *Déclaration d'Halifax*, soit l'*Énoncé raisonné de principes contre le racisme et la Déclaration de bonne santé et de longue vie*. La *Déclaration d'Halifax* vise les objectifs suivants :

1. Porter à l'attention du monde entier la réalité concrète du racisme qui caractérise la société canadienne et tel qu'il se manifeste en particulier par la stigmatisation et la marginalisation collectives.
2. Contribuer à la Troisième Conférence mondiale contre le racisme, la discrimination raciale, la xénophobie et l'intolérance qui y est associée en amplifiant les voix des victimes-survivants du racisme de manière à influencer et à traduire en actes concrets les politiques publiques du monde occidental.
3. Saisir et dégager les éléments du consensus atteint au terme du colloque international et mettre en lumière l'identité collective et l'esprit de solidarité de tous les peuples de descendance africaine de par le monde.

Afin de favoriser une prise de conscience au sein de la collectivité, le colloque s'est écarté des paradigmes traditionnels pour se fonder sur la spiritualité, l'identité culturelle noire et l'affirmation collective tels que mis en valeur dans les trois sous-thèmes : *Bâtir la solidarité mondiale*, *Revendication des réparations* et *Élaboration de stratégies mondiales*.

Le colloque s'inscrit dans le sillage d'une série d'initiatives de la diaspora noire par lesquelles les peuples de descendance africaine se rencontrent de manière proactive pour faire le point sur l'impact du racisme sur leur vie individuelle et collective. Les travaux, discussions, perspectives et expériences du colloque ont mis en relief et ont reflété les préoccupations exprimées lors de réunions antérieures ayant trait à WCAR qui ont eu lieu à Santiago du Chili, à Vienne, à Genève et à Toronto.

L'émergence de phénomènes tels que *le déplacement des populations et la perte des terres* qui s'ensuit en Nouvelle-Écosse, en Colombie, dans la République démocratique du Congo, de même qu'en Afrique du Sud, pour ne nommer que ces régions, montre bien que la communauté noire partage en commun le même vécu et doit, par nécessité, se mobiliser pour **élaborer des stratégies d'intervention internationales en faveur des peuples de descendance africaine**. La négrophobie ou la montée du racisme à l'égard des Noirs à travers le monde prouve qu'il faut intervenir de toute urgence et **en priorité auprès de nos Jeunes**, afin de les éduquer et de leur fournir les armes nécessaires pour reconnaître et contrer efficacement le racisme. Une autre priorité qui s'impose à nous est de mettre fin à la marginalisation générale de la Mère Afrique et de notre histoire, **en retrouvant, en revendiquant et en revalorisant l'histoire des peuples africains**.

En tant que membres de la communauté de descendance africaine du monde entier, **nous, les participants, convenons unanimement que l'esclavage et la Traite des esclaves devraient être reconnus comme des crimes contre l'Humanité** et, compte tenu de la tradition enracinée de racisme et de discrimination raciale que continue à subir la communauté noire du monde entier, **la question des Réparations** doit être abordée dans un esprit global, de manière concertée, avec une rigueur scrupuleuse, afin de compenser les torts qui continuent à entraver l'émancipation totale de nos peuples au sein de nos propres communautés territoriales et partout dans le monde.

En tant que membres de la communauté mondiale de descendance africaine,

- Nous, les participants au symposium international sur "Le racisme et la riposte du peuple noir", entérinons l'esprit et les principes de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Vienne à l'égard des peuples de descendance africaine.
- Nous appuyons les initiatives en faveur de l'affirmation de la communauté noire telles que la Nouvelle initiative africaine adoptée par l'Organisation de l'Unité africaine.
- Nous reconnaissons que, étant donné que les peuples africains ont souffert et continuent à souffrir d'une blessure collective, nous avons par conséquent besoin d'une guérison collective, et nous devons nous atteler à créer des sanctuaires de guérison, où nous pouvons panser nos plaies et pardonner à nous-mêmes ainsi qu'aux auteurs des agressions physiques et culturelles que nous avons subies.
- Nous sommes éminemment conscients de l'interdépendance de l'humanité et nous nous engageons à nouer des partenariats et à forger des alliances avec tous les peuples qui partagent nos idéaux et nos objectifs communs.

## EN CONSEQUENCE:

**Nous invitons tous les peuples de descendance africaine à travers le monde entier à adopter le 21 mars, la Journée internationale de l'élimination de la discrimination raciale. Que cette date devienne un point de ralliement et fournisse aux communautés de descendance africaine l'occasion de convoquer, chacune à leur tour, les membres de la diaspora africaine mondiale à une réunion annuelle ayant pour but de dresser le bilan, de faire le suivi et de veiller à la mise en oeuvre des "Stratégies d'affirmation de la communauté noire" destinées à éliminer le racisme et la discrimination raciale!**



# La Declaración de Halifax de Principios y Prioridades

Halifax, Nueva Escocia, Canadá  
el 5 - 10 de agosto 2001

*La Declaración de Halifax de Principios y Prioridades* fue adoptada el 10 de agosto del 2001 por más de 200 participantes locales, nacionales e internacionales en un simposio internacional en Halifax, Nueva Escocia, "la Cuna de la comunidad negra indígena de Canadá", bajo el tema *Racismo y la Respuesta del Mundo Negro*. Este simposio internacional, convocado bajo los auspicios de la **Cátedra James Robinson Johnston de Estudios de los Negros Canadienses** de la Universidad de Dalhousie, conmemoraba la *Tercera Década de Las Naciones Unidas Contra el Racismo*, y sirvió como preludeo al *Tercer Congreso Mundial de la ONU Contra el Racismo, la Discriminación Racial, la Xenofobia y la Intolerancia Relacionada (WCAR)*, programada para Durban, Sudáfrica, en agosto de 2001.

*La Declaración de Halifax* se complementa por dos documentos realizados en Nueva Escocia: una *Declaración a Base de Principios Contra el Racismo* y una *Declaración de Buena Salud y de Vida Larga*. Esta **Declaración de Halifax** tiene como propósito:

1. Exponer y enfocar la atención global en la realidad material del racismo como una experiencia en la sociedad canadiense, y así como particularmente a través de la estigmatización en grupo y la marginalización colectiva.
2. Contribuir al Tercer Congreso Mundial Contra el Racismo, la Discriminación Racial, la Xenofobia y la Intolerancia Relacionada por medio de amplificar las voces de las Víctimas-Sobrevivientes del Racismo para influenciar y dirigirse concretamente a la política pública en el hemisferio occidental.
3. Capturar y presentar los puntos de consenso que emerjan de las deliberaciones del simposio y reflejar la comunalidad y la solidaridad compartidas globalmente por la gente de descendencia africana.

Cambiando de paradigmas para tratar el nivel de comodidad de la gente negra, el simposio se basaba en la Espiritualidad, la Identidad de la Cultura Negra y la Comunidad, lo que realizó los tres temas básicos interconectados: *Construyendo la Solidaridad Global, Construyendo el Caso para la Reparación, y Construyendo Estrategias Globales*.

Este simposio constituye solamente otro punto más en la continua serie de iniciativas africanas diaspóricas en las cuales la gente de descendencia africana proactivamente se reúne para tratar el impacto del racismo en nuestras vidas individual y colectiva. Las deliberaciones, las discusiones, las perspectivas y las experiencias del simposio resuenan con y reflejan las preocupaciones y los asuntos que también han preocupado aquellas anteriores reuniones relacionadas con WCAR en Santiago de Chile, Viena, Ginebra y Toronto.

Los temas que emergieron, tales como la *dislocación de la población* y la *pérdida concomitante de la tierra* en Nueva Escocia, Colombia, la República Democrática del Congo, y Sudáfrica señalan la comunalidad de nuestra experiencia y nos impulsan a ver la necesidad de desplegar esfuerzos vigorosos dirigidos a una **estrategia internacional entre la gente de descendencia africana**. *La negrofobia*, o la globalización del racismo contra la población negra, confirma la urgencia por la cual, **debemos enfocarnos en nuestros jóvenes** como prioridad superior, educando y equipándolos para reconocer y para enfrentar el racismo con eficacia. La otra prioridad importante para nosotros es la de acabar con la marginalización globalizada de la Madre África y de nuestra historia por medio de **recuperar, reclamar y rehabilitar la historia de la gente africana**.

Como miembros de la comunidad de descendencia africana mundial, **los participantes convenimos unánimemente que la esclavitud y el comercio de los esclavos deben ser declarados crímenes contra la Humanidad**; y, debido a la herencia continua del racismo y de la discriminación racial heredados por la comunidad mundial de la gente de descendencia africana, **el tema de Reparación** debe ser tratado de una manera mundial concertada, con rigor escrupuloso, para corregir esos males que continúan impidiendo la participación completa de nuestra gente dentro de nuestras comunidades territoriales y globales.

Como miembros de la comunidad de descendencia africana mundial:

- **Los participantes abrazamos el espíritu y los principios** de la *Declaración y el Plan de Acción de Viena para Gentes de Descendencia Africana*.
- **Apoyamos iniciativas** que valorizan la Comunidad Negra tales como el *Plan para Iniciativos Africanos* adoptado por la Organización de la Unidad Africana.
- **Reconocemos** que, como Gente Africana, hemos sufrido y seguimos sufriendo daños contra nuestro grupo. Por lo tanto estamos en necesidad de un curativo colectivo, y debemos comenzar a crear los **santuarios necesarios para la recuperación**, en los cuales podamos curar y perdonarnos a nosotros mismos así como a los responsables de los asaltos físicos y culturales contra nosotros.
- **Estamos vivamente enterados** de la interdependencia de la humanidad y resolvemos construir sociedades y coaliciones con toda la gente que comparta nuestras metas comunes.

## POR LO TANTO:

**Invitamos a Gente de Descendencia Africana a través el mundo a adoptar el 21 de marzo, el Día Internacional para la Eliminación de la Discriminación Racial, como punto de reunión, alrededor del cual distintas Comunidades de Descendencia Africana, por turnos, puedan convocar anualmente reuniones africanas diaspóricas para evaluar, vigilar e implementar Estrategias que valorizan la Comunidad Negra para eliminar el Racismo y la Discriminación Racial.**



# The Halifax Declaration of Principles and Priorities



Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
August 5th - 10th, 2001

The *Halifax Declaration of Principles and Priorities* was adopted on August 10th, 2001 by more than 200 local, national, and International participants at an international Symposium in Halifax, Nova Scotia, "the cradle of Canada's indigenous Black Community", under the theme *Racism and the Black World Response*. This International Symposium, convened under the auspices of the **James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies** at Dalhousie University, commemorated the *United Nations 3rd Decade Against Racism*, and served as a prelude to the *UN 3rd World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR)*, scheduled for Durban, South Africa, in August 2001.

The *Halifax Declaration* is complemented by two Nova Scotian crafted documents, a *Principled Statement of Position Against Racism*, and a *Declaration of Good Health and Long Life*. This *Halifax Declaration* is meant to:

1. Expose and focus global attention on the **material reality of Racism** as experienced in Canadian society, and as particularized through *group stigmatization and collective marginalization*.
2. Contribute to the *3rd World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* by amplifying the voices of the Victims-Survivors of Racism so as to influence and concretely address public policy in this Western Hemisphere.
3. Capture and present the points of consensus emerging from the Symposium deliberations and reflect the commonality and solidarity shared globally by African Descended Peoples.

Shifting paradigms to address Black comfort level, the Symposium was grounded on Spirituality, Black Cultural Identity, and Community, which enhanced the three inter-connected core themes: *Building Global Solidarity*, *Building the Case for Reparations*, and *Building Global Strategies*.

This Symposium constitutes but another point on the continuum of African Diasporic initiatives wherein African Descended peoples have proactively come together to address the impact of Racism on our individual and collective lives. The Symposium deliberations, discussions, perspectives, and experiences resonate with and reflect concerns and issues that also have preoccupied those earlier WCAR related gatherings at Santiago de Chile, Vienna, Geneva, and Toronto.

Such emerging themes as *population displacement* and concomitant *land loss* in Nova Scotia, Colombia, The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa...pinpoint the commonality of our experience and drive home the necessity for us to deploy concerted efforts aimed at **international strategizing among African Descended Peoples**. The globalization of *anti-Black Racism* confirms the urgency why **we must focus on our Youth** as a top priority, educating and equipping them to recognize and deal with Racism effectively. The other pressing priority for us is to end the globalized marginalization of Mother Africa and our History by **recovering, reclaiming and rehabilitating the History of African Peoples**.

As Members of the global African Descended Community, **we Participants unanimously agree that Slavery and the Slave Trade should be declared crimes against Humanity**; and, because of the on-going legacy of Racism and Racial Discrimination inherited by the global Community of African Descended Peoples, **the issue of Reparations** must be addressed in a concerted global fashion, with scrupulous rigour, so as to correct those wrongs which continue to impede the full participation of our Peoples within our territorial and global communities.

As Members of the global African Descended Community:

- **We Participants embrace the spirit and principles** of the *Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action for African Descended Peoples*.
- **We support** such Black Community-Affirming initiatives as the *Africa Initiative Plan* adopted by the Organization of African Unity.
- **We acknowledge** that, since as African Peoples we have suffered and continue to suffer group injury, we therefore are in need of collective Healing, and must set about creating the necessary **sanctuaries of recovery**, wherein we can Heal and forgive ourselves as well as the perpetrators of the physical and cultural assaults against us.
- **We are acutely aware** of the inter-dependency of Humanity and **we resolve to build Partnerships and Coalitions** with all like-minded peoples who share our common goals.

## THEREFORE:

We call upon African Descended Peoples world-wide to adopt March 21st, the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, as a rallying point around which rotating Communities of African Descent, can convene yearly African Diasporic meetings for us to assess, monitor, and implement "Black Community-Affirming Strategies" to eliminate Racism and Racial Discrimination.

Contact: BlackResponse@hotmail.com



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