

Thank you again for supporting the event on October 24, 2020 for the Young Canadians' Parliament (YCP) hosted by Children First Canada (CFC)!

There will be one digital forum each month until November 2020. The objectives of the digital forums are to educate children about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to educate them on their options to take action, advise on the impacts of COVID-19, and to provide a platform to exercise their rights, including having direct access to parliamentarians and decision makers to share their recommendations and perspective.

Each month, this program was co-designed with CFC Youth Ambassadors to contribute to the vision and outcomes of the YCP:

- A coordinated response by federal government and civil society organizations that responds to the priorities of children and youth impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Public policies intended to improve the lives of children will be reflective of the interests and concerns of young Canadians.
- Improved outcomes for the health and wellbeing of all 8 million children in Canada.
- Increased political will to address the urgent threats to childhood.
- A coherent policy framework to improve children's wellbeing.

Introduction

Canadian businessman Wes Hall spoke about his experiences of anti-Black systemic racism in Canada and provided a short overview of his efforts to end anti-Black racism in corporate Canada.

Three Breakout Sessions were held on How to stand in solidarity against anti-Black racism, History of people of African and Caribbean descent in Canada, and How to advocate for yourself when experiencing anti-Black racism in systems- a session is for youth who self-identify as Black or of African or Caribbean descent.

Following the breakout sessions, Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, Shadow Minister Kenny Chui and Members of Parliament; Greg Ferguson, Sameer Zuberi, Matthew Green and Jenica Atwin, responded to participants' questions and comments about anti-Black racism and activism.

Tamar Brannigan, the Manager of Community Crisis Responders for the Kid's Help Phone, spoke about Kids Help Phones' strategy to better support Black youth in Canada.

Joshua Watkis closed the event with a spoken word performance.

The Discussion Topics Relation to the UNCRC

All of the topics on Anti-Black Racism discussed by the educators relate to:

Article 2: Non-discrimination

All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3: Best interests of the Child

All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 6 - Life, Survival, and Development

Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.

Each presentation recognizes the fundamental need for non-discrimination. Furthermore, each presentation highlights that as long as racism and systemic racism continue to be commonplace in society, the best interests of children are not met, and their right to develop to their full potential is not realized.

How to Stand in Solidarity Against Anti-Black Racism

Summary of Presentation

Anti-Black racism is perpetuated through every level in society. Black people experience racism from:

- Individuals- Biases & beliefs, words and actions
- Institutions- Education, Justice
- Culture- societal beliefs, "traditions" and norms and
- Systems- Laws and government

Anti-Black racism from centuries ago and today have resulted in adaptive survival behaviours, harm and death within the Black community; that is why those who have experienced anti-Black racism, alive today are survivors of anti-Black racism.

Aspects of one's identity aside from race which can result in economic, social and other systemic issues include:

- Ethnicity
- Age
- Ability
- Gender
- Sexual orientation/ Gender Identity
- Immigration Status
- Income

However, the factors listed above can also create positions of privilege. Solidarity and being an ally are about using positions of privilege and power to address another group's oppression.

To be a useful ally:

- Always centre the impacted- work alongside those you want to support. However, remember that it is their experiences that matter.
- Listen and learn from those who live the oppression- keep in mind that someone is experiencing oppression in spaces you have the privilege.
- Leverage your privilege- don't feel guilty or upset about the privilege you hold; use it to make a difference.
- Yield the floor- don't take up space where your privileged voice doesn't matter. Create space for those who have not yet been heard.

This topic relates to an additional right under the UNCRC:

Article 30: Minority Culture, Language and Religion

Children have the right to practice their own culture, language and religion- or any they choose. Minority and Indigenous children need special protection of this right.

More than anything else, we want you to know:

- Young people are eager to get more involved in anti-racism discussions in Canada.
- We want the government to evaluate the current measures put into place to prevent anti-Black racism; is it working so far?
- As an unanticipated benefit of the COVID-19 lockdowns, young people have become more aware of anti-Black racism as we are using social media as a tool to spread awareness.

History of People of African and Caribbean Descent in Canada

Summary of Presentation

African Canadians have made significant contributions to economics, politics, academia, law, arts and culture in Canada.

In particular, African Nova Scotians are a unique and distinct population, as their history dates back to the province's founding. Nova Scotian history includes three significant Black immigration waves to Canada- the Black Loyalists, Maroons and Black refugees. Of the three groups, none of them were given what they were promised. They were treated poorly and given land that couldn't be cultivated.

Many African Canadians continue to face significant economic, social and other systemic issues related to their identity as a direct result of their history.

- Increased school suspensions
- Low employment rates and low income
- High incarceration rates with longer sentences for the same crime
- Living in unsafe, underserved neighbourhoods with less access to services, recreation and transit
- Underrepresentation and social exclusion from decision making
- Taunting, isolation, stigma, rejection
- Negative impacts on mental health and well being
- Intergenerational trauma

Racism persists because we take colour-blind approaches that do not take seriously race, racism and the historical government policies that inflicted trauma onto multiple generations of Black families. Canadians need to understand Canada's full and accurate history; otherwise, anti-Black racism cannot be addressed effectively.

This topic relates to an additional right under the UNCRC:

Article 29: Aims of Education

A child's education should foster respect for the child's cultural identity (section c) and promote peace, tolerance, equality and friendship amongst all peoples (section d).

More than anything else, we want you to know:

- The history of brutality towards Black Canadians is not taught to us in our schools. We want to know why anti-Black racism is seen only as an American problem when we know it is not.
- We want to know how the government plans to address its history and the ongoing issue of anti-Black racism.
- We want a more inclusive curriculum when learning about Canadian History, including Canada's history of slavery and segregation.

How to Advocate for Yourself When Experiencing Anti-Black Racism in Systems

Summary of Presentation

Canada's existing systems were not designed to include Black people or to accommodate their unique experiences. While systems were being developed, Black people were thought of as less than human, whose culture and being should be suppressed. As a result, Canada's current systems, particularly the child welfare system, often hurt rather than serve Black youth within the system.

According to the personal accounts of youth in care, the child welfare system's operation rarely meets the standards of the law in Canada. Youth in care experience:

- Physical and emotional harm
- Coercion from authorities
- Abysmal living conditions
- Devaluation of their family's culture

It is critical for Black children in the child welfare system, or at the risk of harm, to access the information and resources, they need to learn about their legal rights and advocate for themselves within systems.

Resources youth should familiarize themselves with to learn about their rights include.

- The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC)
- Hair Story rooted: A firm foundation for the future of Black youth in Ontario's systems of care
- Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA)
- Searching for home: reimagining residential care

Most importantly, to advocate for themselves, youth should record their every interaction with authority figures, recording the date, time, people's names and what they had on that day.

To engage in self-advocacy, youth must understand that documents such as the UNCRC and CYFSA are the law in Canada. If they are not experiencing the level of care they are entitled to, they are experiencing a human rights issue.

This topic relates to three additional rights under the UNCRC:

Article 12: Respect for the Views of the Child

Children have the right to give their opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

Article 18: Responsibility of Parents

Children have the right to be raised by their parent(s) if possible.

Article 19: Protection from Violence

Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.

More than anything else, we want you to know:

- We feel like the current and existing efforts to address anti-Black racism in systems, especially the education system, are insufficient.
- Many of us experience anti-Black racism in school from authority figures such as teachers. We believe they are not held accountable.
- We would like to know how the Canadian government will ensure members of the Black community who have suffered under racist police brutality will receive correct justice.

Quotes from Joshua Watkis

Generational Curses

"To break generational curses,
One must reverse the originals incantations.
Inverse and uproot them from the earth
By speaking new cycles to truth.

We don't like to talk about the underbelly of Black Magic.
The rot in the wood of our family trees.
They way that even if you excel in manifesting your dreams, chains run deeper than being
enslaved or free."

The Issue

"The issue is that white people,
after millennia spent in the dark,
forsook it; projected onto it
every nightmare they possessed.

And that in their misunderstanding of radiance,
of all in this world that is pure,
they took fair to mean clean
instead of hidden from the sun."

Conclusion

Our discussions showed us how anti-Black racism prevents some Children in Canada from experiencing their rights to non-discrimination, their best-interest, survival and development. We need our systems to address the historical and persistent barriers Black children face in Canada to realize all children's best interests.

Our expressed concerns are a challenge to the government at all levels to challenge anti-Black racism in Canada.

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