CANADIAN DIVERSITY

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

PART 2

FACING THE CHANGE

CANADA AND THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Special Edition in Partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO

VOLUME 16 | NO.4 | 2019

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization · CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

ACS • AEC Association for Canadian Studies • Association d'études canadiennes

METROPOLIS

ZINTROSPECTION

Romain Jean-Jacques
aka Larost

PART 2

"You write in order to change the world... if you alter, even but a millimeter the way people look at reality, then you can change it." – James Baldwin

INTRODUCTION

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD

SEEING WHAT IS AND WHAT CAN BE

THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

HOW DO YOU SEE ME?

CANADIAN DIVERSITY IS PUBLISHED BY ACS • AEC
Association for Canadian Studies • Association d'études canadiennes

CANADIAN DIVERSITÉ CANADIENNE

PUBLISHER
Jack Jedwab

MANAGING EDITOR
Miriam Taylor

TRANSLATOR
Miriam Taylor

DESIGN & LAYOUT
CAMILAHGO. studio créatif
camilahgo@gmail.com

Canadian Diversity is a quarterly publication of the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS). Opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ACS or sponsoring organizations. The Association for Canadian Studies is a voluntary non-profit organization. It seeks to expand and disseminate knowledge about Canada through teaching, research and publications. The ACS is a scholarly society and a member of the Humanities and Social Science Federation of Canada.

LETTERS

Comments on this edition of Canadian Diversity?
We want to hear from you!

Canadian Diversity / ACS
850-1980 Sherbrooke Street West
Montréal, Québec H3H 1E8

Or e-mail us at <miriam.taylor@acs-aec.ca>

This special edition of *Canadian Diversity* is published in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

We wish to thank them for their valued collaboration.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

A special thank you to Mireille Apollon, Vice-President and to David Schimpky, Special Advisor, Strategic Initiatives and External Relations.

COVER ART

Emergence 13 by Nadine Valcin

INTRODUCTION

Dahabo Ahmed Omer is the Chair of the Federation of Black Canadians and the Director of Operations at the Somali Centre for Family Services. She is the co-founder of the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition which has pushed for changes to law enforcement and the justice system since Abdi's death following his violent arrest in central Ottawa in 2016 and a board member of the Black Agenda Noir organization, a Circle of United Black Citizens whose goal is to cement Black presence on the national radar. She has been the recipient of notable awards over the years including the exceptional service within the Federal Public Service, the Canada150 Community Builder Award, The Hope Academy community contribution award, the Ottawa Black History Community Leadership Award and most recently the top 100 under 40 Most Influential Person of African descent in support of United Nations decade.

As Chair of the Federation of Black Canadians, I am regularly in conversation with activists, leaders, thinkers and the many people who make up the diverse Black communities across this country. I'm therefore glad to have the opportunity to join the 'conversation' taking place in this second volume of *Canadian Diversity*'s special issue on the International Decade for People of African Descent, which has been commissioned by our friends at the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

The previous volume was published at the end of February, to mark the closing of Black History Month. I doubt that any of us imagined that so much momentous Black history would be happening in the weeks leading up to the publication of this second volume.

The sad truth, however, is that no one should be surprised at the most recent manifestations of racism. With respect to the pandemic, it's been clear for a very long time that Black Canadians disproportionately experience poverty, environmental racism, and challenges with access to health care. Though we still lack race-based statistics on incidents of COVID-19, we know that these factors play a huge role in the number of Black people contracting the virus.

Nor should we be surprised at yet another incident of police violence against people of African descent. For several years, I co-led the Justice for Abdirahman coalition in Ottawa, which sought sweeping changes to policing and the justice system. Abdirahman Abdi was a 37-year-old Somali-Canadian with mental health issues and no criminal history, who died on July 24, 2016, during a violent altercation with Ottawa Police. With our fellow activists and organizers in the United States, we share the deep sorrow that more continue to die. And we are frustrated by supportive words that don't lead to concrete action.

Diversity and inclusion are not starting points for anti-racism – they are outcomes that result from actively and meaningfully decolonizing your organizational structure and relationships.

The articles for this issue, which were developed prior to the recent events, shed light on what it means to be Black in Canada. The theme of the first issue was *Facing the Change*, which was inspired by James Baldwin's famous quote "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." This volume is inspired by another quote from him: "You write in order to change the world… if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change it."

My hope is that as you read these thoughtful papers, you see the world in a different way and take an active role in supporting, investing, learning and helping the Black community prosper.

OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Dr. Miriam Taylor is the director of Publications and Partnerships at the Association for Canadian Studies.

This special edition of *Canadian Diversity* created in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to mark the International Decade for people of African Descent and entitled *Facing the Change: Canada and the International Decade for People of African Descent*, is published in two parts.

With an introduction calling for all to "take an active role in supporting, investing, learning and helping the Black community prosper" by Federation of Black Canadians Chair, Dahabo Ahmed Omer, this second issue is divided into four sections.

The first section, "Looking Back to Look Ahead" opens with a contribution by The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean who challenges the notion that "Black history" belongs exclusively to Black people and argues that resistance to racism and efforts to eradicate discrimination are essential to building a society based on universal humanistic values and the enjoyment of full fundamental human rights by all. Abdi Bileh also looks at the transformative power of history education and its essential role in building a better society by contributing to the awakening of young people to better equip them to build inclusive economies, more dynamic civil and political institutions and healthier and safer cities.

Section two, "Seeing what is, and what can be", contains three articles that explore the mechanisms of and solutions to systemic discrimination. Juliana West and Christine Lwanga seek to offer an alternative way of viewing differences among people, and to deconstruct rigid hierarchical discourse inhibiting positive identities and inclusion. They emphasize the way in which diversity can be understood and recognized as a valuable resource to support deeper 'self' and 'other' awareness, human development and social justice.

In a consideration of the situation faced by Black communities in Quebec, Bochra Manai, Ricardo Gustave, Didier Boucard view the International Decade for People of African descent as providing an opportunity to truly recognize and address the systemic inequalities created by racialized social relations and economic inequalities. Part of the way forward, they argue, lies in highlighting the important contributions of Afro-Quebecers in enriching our society and culture, through the creation of sites preserving and honouring cultural tradition and heritage.

In an article on the educational experiences of Black youth, Carl James documents how endemic antiblack racism has sorted Black youth into status-differentiated educational programs that have structured their lives, contributed to their racialization, and accounted for their poorer social and educational outcomes. He calls for the overdue need to recognize and address the educational system's failure and its consequences on the educational, psychic and social wellbeing of Black youth and larger Black communities.

Entitled "The view from within", the third section focuses on the urgent need for healing. Darlene Lozis insists on the vital importance of addressing decades of psychosomatic trauma

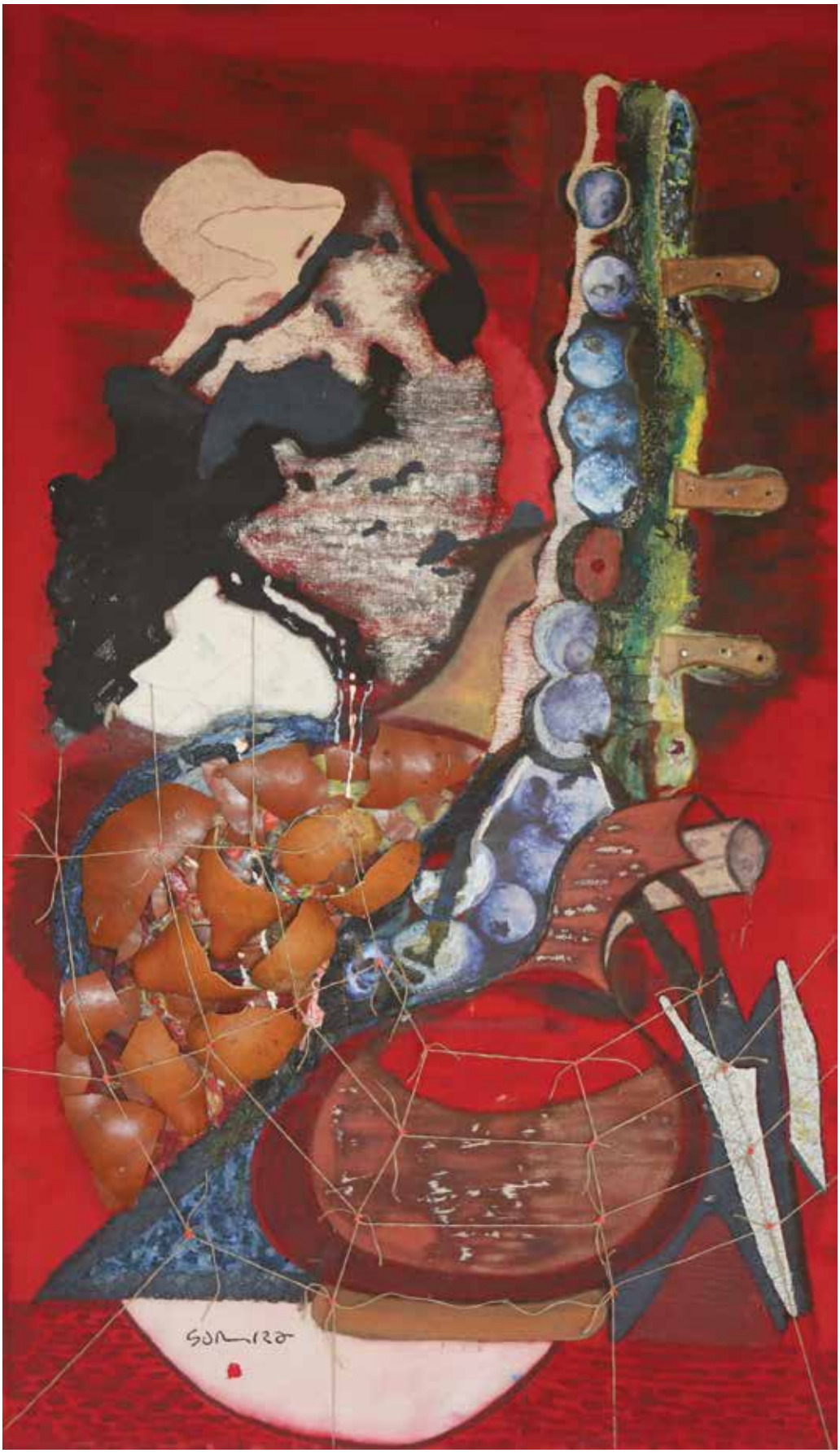
experienced by Afro-descendants brought about by inequities built into the system. The healing of the collective soul can only be accomplished, explains Lozis, by tackling such critical problems as the overrepresentation of Black youth in our prisons. Atieno highlights the integral role played by art in the creation of identities showing art's unique power to change and shape the Black experience. She focuses on the inspirational work of three black women artists in Vancouver whose lives and art serve to heal and validate Blackness in a community which has suffered from erasure and a fragmented sense of self.

The final section, "How do you see me?" speaks to vital questions of definition, identity and intersectionality. Activist Cicely Blain points to the need to apply a framework of intersectionality to celebrating the Decade for People of African Descent. She exposes the visibility paradox of Black Canadian LGBTQ2S+ communities who experience both constant hypervisibility – making them more vulnerable to scrutiny and violence, but also invisibility – making their unique perspectives so ubiquitously marginalized and ignored. In an article investigating the notion of an *Afro-Métis* nation, poet George Elliott Clarke raises such fundamental philosophical questions as the process by which nations get created and whose role it is to define community identities, control community cultures and write community histories.

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD

"The challenges faced by people of African descent are in part the legacy of the shameful, centuries-long practice of slavery, discrimination and segregation. Racism, structural discrimination, marginalization, hate speech and hate crimes remain virulent and widespread, despite all we have experienced and learned over the years. Migrants and refugees from Africa are among today's most vulnerable people, at the intersection of discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, social and economic status, and citizenship. It is all the more impressive that in spite of this adversity, people of African descent are leaders in all walks of life, from art to business, politics to philanthropy, sport to statesmanship, music, literature and the sciences."

– António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations



TROU DE MÉMOIRE
Eugène Gumira

THE ERADICATION OF DISCRIMINATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIVERSAL HUMANISTIC VALUES

FROM COMMON HISTORY TO SHARED HUMANITY

The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean is the 27th Governor General, Commander-in-Chief of Canada, former UNESCO Special Envoy to Haiti, 3rd Secretary General of La Francophonie, and co-founder of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation.

In the previous issue of *Canadian Diversity*, under the title *A Decade to Eradicate Discrimination and the Scourge of Racism: National Black Canadians Summits Take on the Legacy of Slavery*, I set out to reflect on the unprecedented mobilization of Afro-descendant communities across Canada. The opportunity to be seized comes with the International Decade of People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development (2015-2024) proclaimed by the United Nations, which calls on all Member States to act against the systemic racism faced by Blacks in all sectors of our societies.

Black communities hold that, in terms of the realities they face, nothing – policies or action plans – should be designed or implemented without their involvement. Such is the raison d'être of the National Black Canadians Summit, an inclusive space that brings together a multiplicity of voices and perspectives for exchange and debate, the identification of issues, the involvement of actors from different sectors, the development of conversations and proposals. The objective is also to ensure that Canada, from the federal government on to provincial and municipal governments, actors in institutional and private sectors take the full measure of the problem and commit themselves to concrete action, in keeping with the spirit of the call issued by the United Nations. Organized by the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, with a first edition in Toronto in 2017 and a second one in Ottawa in 2019, bringing together each time hundreds of citizens from Black communities with strong participation from youth and the inclusion of decision makers from all sectors, public and private with political leaders, the third edition of the Summit, scheduled for March 20-21-22, 2020 in Halifax, had to be postponed to March 19-20-21, 2021, due to the lockdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, we keep a wary eye. It has not escaped our notice how the most vulnerable communities, Black communities in this instance, are more strongly impacted by the crisis and its collateral damage.

Increasing the alarm, we see how much hatred and rejection add to the scourge everywhere, a global phenomenon regularly deplored by the United Nations. The whole world has witnessed the violent and inhuman police intervention against George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American suf-

focated to death in Minneapolis, and how the resulting outrage led to mass demonstrations and riots in many US cities. "This is the latest in a long line of killings of unarmed African Americans by US police officers and members of the public," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, my friend Michelle Bachelet, in a strong statement calling for justice. "We all watch in horror and consternation what's going on in the United States," said the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau. "It is a time for us as Canadians to recognize that we, too, have our challenges. That Black Canadians and racialized Canadians face discrimination as a lived reality every single day. There is systemic discrimination in Canada, which means our systems treat Canadians of colour, Canadians who are racialized differently than they do others."

As evidence, look to the thousands of Canadians, young people of all origins and shades of colour especially, who have since taken to the streets in many cities across Canada and around the world, chanting: "Black Lives Matter! Our lives matter too! All lives matter!", along with George Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe!" because indeed, the air has become unbreathable with hatred of the other.

So what should we make of Canada's history of racism? Two compelling yet little known threads compete to define Canadian history. One reminds us that Canada's past is rooted in ethnic and racial conflicts that remain highly oppressive and destructive, and just as blatantly and brutally obvious. Another thread projects the uplifting vision of a post-racial society, one that heralds Canada as a haven of peace, a land of perfect social harmony through diversity, where conflict and bias have been overcome.

Compared to other areas of the world where ethnic hatred and racial violence are raging, clearly Canada might be hailed as a global example of community building and intercultural living. Yet to this day, our country is not immune to extreme xenophobic movements whose voices find sympathetic resonance, including within certain political parties. Neither are we exempt from rabid racism, venomous hatred and insidious prejudice pervasively coiled up in all sectors of society, including governments, institutions and businesses that systematically marginalize and exclude. This calls for the utmost vigilance and requires us to act and transcend a weighty legacy, starting with greater awareness.

From the eastern tip westward and northward, Canadian history was in fact forged in the fire and fury of colonial conquest largely propelled by the ideological belief in the supremacy of a *White race* and the odious practice of mass enslavement over centuries, a radical domination enterprise decreed by European metropolises and monarchies that demanded the swift and bloody takeover and exploitation, in their name, of already inhabited territories and continents. In the face of the injustices and racist violence that sully our past, it would serve us well to remember that one of the main foundational dynamics of Canada is also that of fierce resistance, of protracted struggles for the intrinsic dignity of all human beings and genuine equality among all peoples.

It is out of such resistance and struggle that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was born, a fundamental covenant in which equality rights are clearly stated, to ensure that everyone is "treated with the same respect, dignity and consideration (i.e., without discrimination), regardless of personal characteristics such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, marital status or citizenship."

Based on this pact, Canada established itself as a land of refuge par excellence, where diversity does not describe the other, but the whole, a society that defines itself as intercultural and multiracial. Statistics Canada reports over one in five people (22%) categorized as "visible minorities" in 2016, while more than one in four (27%) young Canadians aged 15–34 self-identified as a member of a racial group or fully acknowledged their ethnic origin.

Black Canadians or Canadians of African descent form the third-largest visible minority group in Canada, after South Asian and Chinese Canadians. Based on the 2016 Census, Canada's Black population totalled nearly 1.2 million people, encompassing 3.5 percent of the total population.

A recent social research project by the Environics Institute for Survey Research and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation,[1] the first of its kind to cover race relations across the country, found that racism, as the Canadian Prime Minister has recognized, is still very much a reality in Canada, where one in five Canadians report experiencing discrimination regularly or from time to time due to their race, while another three in ten have experienced discrimination, albeit very rarely. While a full half of Canadians have a personal experience of discrimination, the same study found a large majority acknowledge the existence of racial discrimination. Nearly three out of four Canadians believe that Indigenous Peoples, Black people, and South Asians are prime targets to experience discrimination often or occasionally. By comparison, only a sliver of Canadians (5%) believe that racialized communities never experience discrimination in Canada. As a result, it could be surmised that strength in numbers is on the side of a propensity to recognize racial discrimination in Canada, hopefully with an attendant willingness to eradicate it.

1 *Race Relations in Canada 2019 Survey* by the Environics Institute for Survey Research and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Toronto, December 10, 2019.

ERADICATING DISCRIMINATION

> "We must see racism for what it is. It is a myth of the superior and the inferior race. It is the false and tragic notion that one particular group, one particular race is responsible for all of the progress, all of the insights in the total flow of history. And the theory that another group or another race is totally depraved, innately impure, and innately inferior. In the final analysis, racism is evil because its ultimate logic is genocide."
>
> – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Other America*, April 1967

What if universal humanistic values and the integral enjoyment of all human rights by all was the greatest legacy of a history whose horrors and crimes are at last recognized, their false rationale repudiated, their indignities finally overcome and transcended through recognition, justice and development?

The International Decade for People of African Descent serves to celebrate our existence, our resistance, and our contribution to the betterment of humanity as a whole, the value of struggles for emancipation, the quest for justice as a condition for development at a time when the lethal impacts of climate change, terror and hate, transnational criminality, isolation within traditional and national identities, the proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons, the widening and deepening chasms of inequality increasingly threaten our very existence. Meanwhile, various forms of collective resistance are emerging. Voices are being raised, women, men and young people in their thousands, of all races and origins, take to the streets, determined to act against all forms of latent and recurrent exclusion. Racism has provided an age-old template for other forms of oppression. Consequentially, the fight against racism and discrimination – and the fatal inequities they produce – is also a fight against generic oppression, a way to make humanity more human.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all Member States of the UN in 2015, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on which the Agenda is based, aim to achieve critical progress in improving living conditions and advancing rights around the world. The same spirit moves the International Decade for People of African Descent as an urgent appeal and an opportunity to commit fully to uprooting the barbaric heritage that feeds racism and ensure that no one is left behind. Needless to say, exclusion is counterproductive and generates an abysmal deficit of participation, resources, ideas, solutions, justice, citizenship, and as a consequence, of shared growth, responsible and sustainable development. All sectors of society must be appropriately involved. This is the vision embraced and advocated by the Michaëlle Jean Foundation; that the experience, condition, perspectives and aspirations of Black communities may also espouse those of Aboriginal peoples, other racialized communities, women, LGBTQ2 people, other marginalized and excluded people of Canada. Our hope is to chart a new model of leadership for the common good that is truly inclusive and highly transformative. Such a social vision must be built pragmatically, through concrete actions, mass mobilization and a firm commitment by key decision makers and legislators to listen and stand together with our populations, all those who can no longer wait on the sidelines of the human family.

How is it possible to imagine all forms racism and discrimination eradicated for good? History has the answer.

In the early 19th century, the elimination of chattel slavery would have been considered impossible. This abhorrent yet highly profitable practice, was it not the main driving force behind the world's greatest economic powers for 400 years at the time? European slaveholding regimes dominated the world, capturing colossal wealth through systems of exploitation of unspeakable cruelty and the plunder of resources in the colonies. Yet, by century's end, inspiring, enlightened ideas for the advent of universal humanistic values, the audacity of revolutionary abolitionist movements, decades of valiant acts of resistance and revolt by slaves who had become self-aware and self-reliant in the belief that only they could secure their own freedom won the day and forced human trafficking and slavery to be outlawed.

Beginning in 1791, incessant slave uprisings led to the dismantling of the highly profitable French colony of Saint-Domingue, a struggle that culminated in the 1804 proclamation of the Republic of Haiti. The first free Black republic in the world was born, an unprecedented feat, previously unimaginable. France, together with the rest of the slaveholding allied powers, kingdoms and colonial empires, undertook to do everything to impede and make sure the enterprise of these rebellious Blacks would fail, starting with a total economic embargo. Undeterred, the young Republic of Haiti, with its meagre resources, was bold enough to finance Simon Bolivar's expeditions for the independence of the Latin American colonies, on the explicit condition that he abolish slavery across the continent. Inspired by the example of the Haitian revolution, the impossible dream then spread among the oppressed of the earth. It would outlast the century until the whole African continent was decolonized.

Who would have thought that in 2009, a Black woman of Haitian origin acting as Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada would welcome a man, also of African descent, Barack Hussein Obama, recently elected President and Commander-in-Chief of the United States of America? We walked together with resolve, carried by an immense joy, well aware of the weight of history, our foremothers and forefathers in struggle very much on our minds, all those who had pulled everything they had together to overcome and make an improbable day like this a reality.

Our struggle is a long, winding path, never totally cleared. Nothing is ever a given. The comings and goings of history can take everything away if we are not careful.

Putting a black man to death, a forceful knee on his neck until he suffocates, ignoring his pleas is violence from another time, but it is also very much violence of this day and age. To shut out, to ostracize, to shame, to abuse the other, to pronounce a verdict of inferiority, of undesirability because of skin colour remains an all too common experience. Here lies the motivation behind the National Black Canadians Summit, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation and the many allies who dare think about, and call for, a national plan aimed eradicating racial discrimination, a remnant of slavery, at the intersection of other inequalities based on gender, age, religion, handicap, sexual orientation.

In these uncertain and inward-looking times, when hate speech and hate crimes are on the rise around the world, often with impunity, we face a duty to take action. Let us not be unnerved by hardship, contempt or indifference. Universal humanistic values are a daily struggle, a fervent aspiration we aim to see triumph.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH THE HISTORY OF AFRICANS AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN SCHOOLS?

Abdi Bileh is the Founder and Director general of *Association canadienne pour la promotion des héritages africains* (ACPHA). Originally from the Horn of Africa, Abdi Bileh completed his high school and college studies in Montreal and his post-secondary studies at the University of Ottawa. An Ontario Certified Teacher (EAO), he holds a Master's degree in African Studies, a BA in History and another BA in Education. He has over 15 years of experience in Education and service to the community. He founded a non-profit organization whose humanitarian vision allows the construction of hospitals and schools in poor areas of East Africa and Haiti

Beyond political partisanship, teaching the history of people of African descent in schools is a legitimate necessity. Contrary to what is conveyed by the so-called connoisseurs of Africa,[1] African history spans more than 3,000 years. Undoubtedly, it has been more than 3,000 years[2] since Africa experienced the birth of states, science, great religions, architecture, especially temples and palaces, writing, etc... Rich and complex, African history deserves recognition in national and world history, in short in our collective memory.

There is a legitimate necessity to teach these fundamentals in primary and secondary schools, but it would be a mistake to do so in the form of a sub-history. Nurturing the misconception of African primitivity held by Africanists and some self-styled intellectuals is not at all the teaching we are talking about. Perpetuating the colonialist and paternalistic discourse that promotes ignorance; ignorance that is designed to separate Africa from the rest of the world and thus exclude it from modernity, is not the right kind of education that should be offered in the school curriculum. But why should we teach the history of Afro-descendants in our schools, you might ask?

Some very popular arguments for teaching Afro-descendant history in schools is to adapt to the profile of increasingly multicultural classrooms. This is not an erroneous motivation, but African descendants have been in America for over 400 years and, to date, their history is almost non-existent in Ontarian and Canadian textbooks. In fact, *teaching* the history of people of African descent is often limited to topics about slavery and post-war immigration or the celebration of Black History Month.

Despite the important contribution of Afro-Canadians in many spheres, it is inconceivable that in the twenty-first century we are still debating the relevance of teaching their history and culture in our schools. Some would argue that there is a month set aside for this. A month to tell more than 3,000 years of history, how ironic! One thing is certain, G. Woodson

1 Africanists study African civilizations according to exclusively European criteria. Highly skilful, they have constructed a very solid discourse that participates in an ideology whose aim is to provide a logical explanation for the slave trade, slavery and colonization, on the one hand. On the other hand, Africanists systematically refuse the existence of an African culture and civilization.

2 UNESCO General History of Africa, History of Humanity Volume II: 3000 to 700 BC, Volume editors: A. H. Dani and J.-P. Mohen, Co-directors: J. L. Lorenzo, V. M. Masson, T. Obenga, M. B. Sakellariou, B. K. Thapar and Shang Changshou, Foreword: Jean Pierre Mohen.

and WEB Du Bois, two American thinkers who proposed the need for curricula to teach the history of Afro-descendants in the 1930s, are no doubt turning over in their graves to see that 90 years later the subject is still up for discussion.

Returning to the original issue, that is, the teaching of the history of people of African descent in schools. Breaking the cycle of ignorance is the first order of priority. In our contemporary societies, prejudices inherited from history continue to pollute people's minds and lend support to everyday racism against people of African descent. Teaching Afro-Canadian history is a good way to combat the prejudice and racism that victimize thanks to ignorance. As the saying goes, "ignorance leads to fear. Fear leads to hatred. Hate leads to violence... That is the equation". Ignoring the history and culture of a segment of Canadian society only perpetuates the marginalization of a group of citizens. Yet the Ontario International Education Strategy put in place by the Ontario Ministry of Education (MOE) is supposed to reflect UNESCO's vision "for Global Education for Citizenship" which aims to encourage respect for all, to foster a sense of belonging to a common humanity, and to help learners become responsible and active global citizens.

Teaching the history of people of African descent in schools not only enhances the cultural heritage of this group of citizens, but also strengthens the health of our province and our country. If, for example, our students learned in a history class that the great African civilizations (Mali, Ghana, Songhai, Ethiopia, Sudan, etc.) were not part of a narrow, closed world, but dynamic societies open to the wider world, the frequently negative image of the history of Afro-descendants that is perpetuated would be transformed; and lead to a new sense of mutual understanding. Clearly, educating our students to develop a global perspective on citizenship would give them a better grasp of today's diverse and interconnected world. They would have a better understanding of major historical issues such as the slave trade and colonization, and the impact of these tragic moments in history on our collective memory. In fact, young people would have a better understanding of the causes and modus operandi of slavery and the slave trade, as well as the issues and consequences of slavery in the world. Moreover, the teaching of history in our schools would enable young people to grasp the global transformations and cultural interactions resulting from the history of the slave trade and slavery that have involved all continents and caused considerable upheavals that subsequently shaped our modern societies. At the same time, students would be able to discover Africa's contributions to the construction and transformation of contemporary societies.

By valuing the history and culture of people of African descent in Ontario schools, one can only hope to witness the pride and fulfillment of students from a community with a very high dropout rate. Some believe that multicultural education policies have not had the desired effect. In their view, factors that stem from the relative failure of the multicultural model include racism, the alarming dropout rate, and the non-inclusion of history and minority cultures in teaching practices. Although the issue has agitated Toronto's political and educational circles for some time,[3] the marginalization of black minority history seems to have been the reason for the creation of the first alternative school focused on African history and culture. Advocates of this school are convinced that learning about the achievements and contributions of their ancestors is a source of motivation to curb their children's educational handicaps.

The correlation between dropping out of school and the over-representation of Afro-descendants in prisons is all too clear and is supported by research that states that a large proportion of the prison population has not completed high school. In Canada, Blacks and Aboriginal peoples constitute a disproportionate segment of the prison population and their presence behind bars has exploded over the past decade. According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (November 2013), Blacks are over-represented in prisons "the number of Blacks has grown sharply by 80% in the last 10 years. They represent nearly 10% of the Canadian prison population (9.5%) while they represent less than 3% of the civilian population".[4] In fact, according to the Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator (February 2014), people of African descent make up almost 10% of the Canadian prison population while they represent less than 3% of the civilian population of Canada.[5]

In conclusion, teaching the history of Afro-descendants in schools would have a positive impact on both students of European and African descent. Both can learn more about the history and culture of people of African descent, develop intercultural dialogue among students, and bring together the different cultures present in schools and in the community. For students of African descent, valuing their history may enhance their pride in their origins. For some students, this pride may translate into greater investment in their studies and greater involvement in the community.

In addition, the teaching of African history and culture in schools would enable teaching staff to become familiar with the cultural references of people of African descent. In

3 In 2009, Toronto's first Afrocentric public school opened its doors. This school was created as a result of the dissatisfaction of a group of parents... Its goal is to reduce the high dropout rate among black youth in the city.

4 http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2013/11/26/002-canada-prisons-noirs-autochtones.shtml

5 www.rcinet.ca/fr/2014/02/17/noirs-et-autochtones-surrepresentes-dans-les-prisons-canadiennes

general, the teaching of the history of people of African descent in schools would have a positive impact at the provincial and national levels. Such teaching can undoubtedly contribute to the awakening of young people who, in turn, can build an inclusive economy, more dynamic civil and political institutions and healthier and safer cities. Finally, rethinking the teaching of the history of people of African descent in schools and at various levels requires engagement with people in communities from Africa and its diasporas.

AFRICA
YASMEEN SOUFFRANT

SELF ISOLATION WITH A POTTED PLANT
KOMI OLAF

FEMMES AFRICAINES
YASMEEN SOUFFRANT

SEEING WHAT IS AND WHAT CAN BE

"The pain and anger are still felt. The dead, through their descendants, cry out for justice. The sense of continuity with the past is an integral part of each man's or each woman's identity... But past wrongs must not distract us from present evils. Our aim must be to banish from this new century the hatred and prejudice that have disfigured previous centuries. The struggle to do that is at the very heart of our work at the United Nations."

– Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 1997-2006

OPPRESSION AND PRIVILEGE AS TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN:

DECONSTRUCTING PRIVILEGE TO INITIATE PROCESSES THAT SUPPORT RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY AS RESOURCE

Dr. Juliana West, is a non-racialized second generation Canadian Professor in Social Work at Thomson Rivers University and co-author with Bob Mullaly of *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege: A Critical Approach to Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Privilege Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

Dr. Christine Lwanga is a naturalized African descent Canadian woman. She is a researcher and social / community development consultant on post-doctoral fellowship at University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work. Her work is constructed in post-modernism and critical social theory, human rights and human centered discourses that incorporate spirituality and well-being, and evidence-based practice.

Our dialogue was sparked by a question raised at a conference after Juliana presented on Beyond Discrimination: Oppression and Privilege – Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Privilege (AOAP) Theory and Practice. As part of her response, Juliana explained that oppression and privilege are two sides of the same coin: the social relations that maintain oppression are the same that produce privilege. The processes and structures that maintain enhanced access to opportunities, rewards, and status for privileged social locations come at the expense of reduced or denied access to the same opportunities, rewards, and status for groups experiencing oppression (Mullaly & West, 2018).

OPPRESSION AND PRIVILEGE

Oppression, "a second-class type of citizenship, is assigned to people not on the basis of failure or weakness or lack of merit, but because of their membership in a particular social group" and occurs at three dynamic and interacting levels: the personal, cultural and structural (p. 1). Conversely, privilege, the unearned advantages of special group membership, is both an invisible package of *unearned* assets that can be counted on everyday *and* a series of disadvantages not experienced precisely because of a person's identity (Carbado, 2002).

> "Privilege is not something I take and which I therefore have the option of not taking. It is something that society gives me, and unless I change the institutions which give it to me, they will continue to give it, and I will continue to have it, however noble and egalitarian my intentions." (Harry Brod, cited in Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 35)

Those disadvantages operate as forms of everyday oppression that serve to keep marginalized groups in lower social and economic status. For example, while two social work graduates from the same Canadian university may perform equally well in the labour market, the paths non-racialized social workers may follow, based on their privilege, is likely to be very different from the paths racialized social workers traverse. Moreover, the paths racialized social workers navigate are varied through sexism and how male social

workers can often be afforded greater credibility than what female practitioners experience. The intersection of visible and invisible differences manifesting in religious discrimination, and/or ableism and/or ageism can further diversify paths experienced by racialized social workers.

It is also important to distinguish between earned and unearned advantages and avoid associating all assets as problematic. People with both earned assets (i.e. university education) and privilege (unearned advantages such as being male and/or non-racialized) can use their position to challenge oppression and the unfair advantage of privilege, and to advance equity and the equality of human dignity and opportunity. One such strategy can be through professional caucuses where racialized social workers, or female social workers of African descent, or young male Muslim social workers can experience mentorship as well as form a platform where their expertise informs the deconstruction of oppression and privilege within the larger professional body.

At the personal level, privilege involves those beliefs, attitudes, and actions that project a negative prejudice of particular marginalized social groups with/or a favourable prejudgment of the privileged group. At the cultural level, privilege consists of the belief in a superior culture and an implicit agreement about what is right and normal regarding the shared values, norms, and ways of understanding and behaving (Mullaly & West, 2018).

> "Every day, dominant group members see their identity groups (males, ['white'] people, heterosexuals, etc.), their religion, their social systems, their language, their history, and so on presented as the *norm* in the mass media, in their government bodies, in public school curricula, in advertising, and in other cultural arenas. In effect, they see themselves as the *official culture* of society, which makes them the beneficiaries of cultural privilege and, in many cases, the perpetrators of *ethnocentrism* (i.e., a narrow view of the world from within the confines of one culture)" (p. 47).

Furthermore, at the structural level, privilege is evident in the ways privilege is institutionalized – economic, legal, educational, political and social systems, institutions, policies, processes, and practices all work together in favour of privileged groups at the expense of groups experiencing oppression (Mullaly & West, 2018).

HUMAN DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY AS RESOURCE

The basis of oppression and privilege is how human difference (visible and invisible) is viewed and operationalized (Mullaly & West, 2018). Growing up in a sexist, racist and hierarchical culture, we tend to view difference as better or less than; sometimes this is re-enforced by ego and the fight or flight response. The alternative is to just regard difference as providing an opportunity to explore and interrogate that which is unknown. Post-modernist thinking and critical theory provide frameworks that support open-mindedness and the understanding that there is always more to what we know (Lwanga, 2016). During one of our dialogues, Christine suggested that it was critical to understand that human difference is a resource and not something to resist. Indeed, it is Creator's idea and a re-occurring natural phenomenon that supports life in ways we do not fully understand. It is also easy to explain how human differences can be a valuable resource. For example, a tool on dominant communication styles as invisible differences (https://outsmartyourbrain.com/4-dominant-communication-styles/) demonstrates and teaches how those invisible differences can be used to compliment and support teamwork and how diversity can be recognized and accessed as a resource.

Within the context of the intersectionality of oppression and privilege, our dialogues deepened the understanding of difference as a resource, as opposed to a basis for exploitation or threat. For example, within the context of a forum on the intersectionality of oppression, we need to engage men in championing women's rights in ways that dismantle male dominance and superiority, instead of when addressing racism, witnessing men actively silencing women who speak out against gender inequality. As Johnson (2000) cautions, "We won't get rid of racism... without doing something about sexism and classism, because the system that produces the one also produces the others and connects them" (p. 53).

People's social locations also intersect – their gender, whether and how they are racialized, their class, their sexual orientation, their status, their point of interaction with society, all contribute to the amount of access and inclusion they experience at that particular point in time. In addition, while power exists in all human interactions, a distinction between having power and exercising power is noteworthy. While we all occupy diverse, varying, and intersecting sets of privileged and oppressed social locations, a person's particular configuration may or may not result in a sense of personal power (Mullaly & West, 2018).

Moreover, visible and invisible difference manifests in the externally imposed and internally constructed individual and group identities we occupy. Externally imposed identities, constructed through myths and stereotypes, benefit the dominant group: oppressed groups experience negative stereotypes (less worthy, less capable, less moral) while privileged groups enjoy positive stereotypes (more worthy, more capable, more moral). Internally constructed identities, in contrast, are influenced by internalized second-class status and oppression or internalised privilege (entitlement and superiority) (Mullaly & West, 2018).

> " 'Whiteness' and 'colour' or 'Blackness' are essentially social constructs applied to human beings rather than veritable truths that have universal validity. The power of Whiteness, however, is manifested by the ways in which racialized Whiteness becomes transformed into intellectual, social, political, economic, and cultural behaviour. White culture, norms, and values in all these areas become normative and natural. They become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior" (Henry & Tator, 2009, pp. 25).

STRATEGIES FOR RESISTANCE

While Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) has tended to look outward for change in removing barriers to inclusion and democratic participation, Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Privilege (AOAP) Theory and Practice maintains that the perceptions and expectations arising from privilege must be unsettled, deconstructed, and examined. The lenses of privileged bias are equally urgent and important sites for interrogation (Mullaly & West, 2018).

The key is that everyone has to be at the table. Social justice necessitates that people who experience marginalization, their discourse, experiences, and analyses must form the centre of our knowledge systems and, this transformation needs to include allies (Hooks, 2000). While maintaining the reality of 'race' as a social construction and the post-modern critique of language and discourse, we need to engage those regarded as 'white' in anti-racism work.

There is a need for on-going critical reflection and reflexivity, naming and questioning, and resistance. There is a need for caution – to speak out from a place of critical self-reflection and not from aggression – to understand and use power in ways that do not reproduce that which we seek to overcome – oppression, domination and privilege. There is a need for respecting in-sider outsider positions within the context of multiple identities and social locations. Moreover, there is a need to deconstruct myths and reclaim voice to write a new narrative and claim back power. We need to use terms such as *white* or *black* people with caution acknowledging that colour, as a descriptor used for objects, results in dehumanization when applied to people.

We also need to understand that the policies and practices of inclusion and exclusion occurring at the structural level are based on internalized expectations of privilege and the maintenance of oppressive dominant social relations. The use of white within anti-racism work reinforces the racist agenda and discounts and erases the experiences of oppression of the Ukrainian and Francophone communities in Canada. *Race*, as a time and geographic specific social construct, oppresses and maintains dominance – it cannot empower (Lwanga, 2004). As UNESCO (1978) declared, there is only one human race.

Moreover, we need to use the privilege and power we are afforded to leverage social transformation and to deconstruct how we engage with one another. If we see others only in terms of their usefulness to us, we reduce their humanity to what we perceive their function is. If in contrast, we enter into relationship, into *dialogue*; our encounter transforms and enriches both (Buber, 2010, 1937). Our understanding needs to be tempered by an ongoing and continuous self-interrogation of how our own locations of privilege and oppression affect our understanding and practice. As scholars, social workers, and social activists, our praxis needs to be based on the expertise and scholarship of people with firsthand experience: racialized women academics, new African immigrants, 5th generation racialized Canadian Elders, young queer Muslim men. We can all use our privileged locations to dismantle oppression and privilege.

REFERENCES

Buber, M. (2010, 1937). *I and Thou*. Eastford, CT: Martino Publishing.

Carbado, D. (2002). Straight out of the closet, Race, gender, and sexual orientation. (p. 221-242). Dans Valdes, F., J. McCristal-Culp & A. Harris (Eds). *Crossroads, directions, and a new Critical Race Theory*. Philadelphie, Penn.: Temple University Press.

Henry, F. & C. Tator. (2009). Theoretical perspectives and manifestations of racism in the academy (p. 22-59). In F. Henry and C. Tator (Eds) *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding social justice, inclusion, and equity*. Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press.

Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (2nd ed.). London: Pluto Press.

Johnson, A. (2006). *Privilege, power and difference* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lwanga, C. S. (2004). *A critical case study on the meaning and role of 'race' in human rights work*. (MSW Research Report). Regina, Sask.: Université de Regina. https://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/8459

Lwanga, C. S. K. (2016). *Social Workers' Conceptualizations of Spirituality as Lived Experience in Professional Practice.* PhD Qualitative Research Study University of Manitoba. https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/handle/1993/31863

Mullaly, B. & J. West. (2018). *Challenging oppression and confronting privilege: A critical approach to anti-oppressive and anti-privilege theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press.

Unesco. (1978). *Declaration on race and racial prejudice*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114032_fre.page=62

THE DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT, A QUEBEC PERSPECTIVE

Ricardo Gustave is a Masters candidate in sociology at UQAM and is in charge of knowledge mobilization at *Parole d'excluEs* on issues of systemic racism and discrimination. He participated in the writing of the brief coordinated by *Parole d'excluEs* entitled *Droit à la ville: Montréal-Nord entre disparités territoriales et racisme systémique vécu*, as part of the public consultation on systemic racism and discrimination conducted by the *Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal* (OCPM). He is one of the founding members of the *Regroupement des Professionnels.le.s pour la Réussite des Jeunes* (RPRJ), a community organization that aims to support young people in their educational trajectory. His commitment to social justice and human rights has led him to sit on the board of directors and executive committee of the international cooperation organization Alternatives.

Corporate executive, community worker, business analyst and senior project manager in the financial sector with 20 years' experience, **Didier Boucard** has also launched and developed several local businesses.

Bochra Manaï is a researcher and community professional. Executive Director of Parole d'excluEs, an organization that promotes citizen mobilization in Montreal North for social and territorial transformation. Author of *Les Maghrébins de Montréal* at the PUM, she is interested in issues of otherness in the city, issues of immigration, interethnic cohabitation and the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in urban neighbourhoods.

EMBRACING THE DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN CANADA

Through its International Decade for People of African Descent, the United Nations has declared that the rights of Afro-descendants around the world deserve protection. Scheduled to run from 2015 to 2024, this International Decade aims to recognize rights and implement a multitude of actions aimed at 1) recognition, 2) justice and 3) development. "Today is an important day for Canada. Through our commitment to the International Decade, we will be able to better address the specific and concrete challenges faced by Black Canadians. In this way, we will move forward towards a more just and inclusive country", said Justin Trudeau on January 30, 2018. In introducing the Decade in this way, the Prime Minister of Canada recognizes that there are specificities to the Black condition in Canada, although the country often presents itself as a less "racist" space than its American neighbor (that is one in which relations between black and white populations are less racially based). And yet, as Robyn Maynard notes in *NoirEs sous surveillance*, Canada has its own legacy of slavery and institutional racism, and Quebec is certainly not exempt from this (Maynard, 2018).

According to sociologist Myrlande Pierre, "the size of Black communities in Canada has doubled from 573,860 in 1996 to 1,198,540 in 2016." (Pierre, 2019). Nearly 52% of Canada's Black population resides in Ontario. There has been a change in this population's countries and regions of origin change. Apart from the Black communities historically present in the country, the majority of Black immigrants who arrived in Canada before the 1981 census were born in either Jamaica or Haiti. The main countries of birth of recent Black immigrants, those arriving between 2011 and 2016, are: Haiti, Nigeria, Jamaica, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Statistics Canada, 2019). The size of the Black population in Canada is therefore not negligible.

WHAT SUPPORT IS THERE FOR BLACK COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES?

One of the achievements of the International Decade is in the area of funding for agencies and organizations. Indeed, additional funds have been earmarked for Black communities. In addition to programs designed to fight racism through the federal Anti-Racism Fund, financial support has been provided for entrepreneurship, mental health and youth development issues. For example, Canada has implemented a call entitled "Promoting Health Equity: Black Community Mental Health Fund", which aims to highlight mental health issues and the need to consider the effects of living conditions and racism on individuals. An other example is the first national Institute of Black Canadian with the help of a $25 Million over five years for projects and capital assistance to celebrate, "share knowledge and build capacity in Canada's vibrant Black Canadian communities" (Canada, 2019). If Canadian funding seems to assume the duty to recognize the distinctive circumstances experienced by Black populations, one might wonder what the Quebec counterpart to this funding is? What funds exist and are used to address the realities of Black people in Quebec? The initiatives funded as part of the Decade would, in Quebec, much more than elsewhere, be dependent on the pressure that members from the Black communities can exert. Indeed, even if there are undoubtedly projects created to promote *inclusion* or to support *diversity*, only entrepreneurship or security issues can be financially supported by the public authorities in Quebec.

THE SITUATION OF BLACKS IN QUEBEC

In Quebec, 319,230 citizens are counted as members of Black communities and several generations are included in these statistics. Being Black in Quebec brings with it an important experiential specificity. Black communities have a complex history characterized by racialized social relations and economic inequalities with confinement to restricted employment opportunities and/or to underprivileged urban neighbourhoods. At the same time, this history reveals a culture of social, economic and cultural resistance.

Although the experience of being Black in Quebec cannot be reduced to racialization, some of the lived experiences of Blacks in Quebec serve to define the Black condition in the province: issues such as racial profiling, inequity in the justice system, systemic economic and social inequalities, and lack of representation in the political sphere and other decision-making bodies, to name but a few.

The 2006 census data presented by Statistics Canada shows that the Black population in Quebec has a lower employment rate and an unemployment rate almost twice as high as that of the general population (13.5% vs. 7.0%). Far from enjoying a satisfactory economic situation, the average income of the black population is lower than that of the Quebec population as a whole ($22,882 versus $34,074). The same situation is also observed when it comes to the median income of the Black population compared to the Quebec population: $18,071 versus $24,430 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Moreover, according to a report submitted to the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) in August 2019, Blacks and Aboriginals are more likely to be stopped by SPVM officers, i.e., 4 to 5 times more likely than white people (Victor, Hassaoui and Mulone, 2019).

That statistical backdrop serves to illustrate the systemic racism experienced by minorities and Aboriginal populations. The Black reality in Quebec often fails to be recognized by society's institutions, a form of denial that Émilie Nicolas describes as "*original naiveté*" in her text "*La naïveté originelle dont se réclame le Québécois nourit-elle le déni d'un colonialisme bien de chez nous"* (Does the original naiveté that Quebecers claim to possess nourish the denial of a colonialism that is very much home-grown?) (Nicolas, 2020).

This form of denial was brought to light during the controversy surrounding the SLĀV show in Quebec, in June 2018. Speaking on Radio Canada about the accusation of cultural appropriation leveled at Robert Lepage's show, Ricardo Lamour wondered about the then government's lack of interest in the International Decade for People of African Descent in the following terms:

> "...at the provincial level, Philippe Couillard, whose ancestor Guillaume Couillard owned a slave named Olivier Lejeune, how is it that he is slow to ensure that there is support, support in terms of funding that can be channeled to the *Conseil des Arts et Lettres du Québec* and to our other Crown corporations, such as Télé-Québec and so on". (Lamour, June 2018)

This quote from the artist and social entrepreneur sheds a harsh light on Quebec's ability to address the issues faced by Black communities. It is illustrative, as it highlights Quebec's failure to recognize the specific social and economic conditions of Black and minority populations in general.

CITIES, THE IDEAL PLACE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF RACIALISED OR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

THE HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTION OF BLACKS AND THE RECOGNITION IT RECEIVES IN CANADA AND QUEBEC

The contribution of African Canadians to our country began in the early days of New France. Indeed, Mathieu Da Costa arrived in New France in 1608 to help Samuel de Champlain and the French communicate with the Aboriginal peoples.

Several waves of immigrants followed over the centuries, including the Loyalists after the American Civil War and slaves on the Underground Railroad. In fact, many sites already recognize the contribution of people of African descent to Canada: St. Catharine's, Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site, Buxton National Historic Site, Chatham-Kent, Buxton National Historic Site, Chatham-Kent, St. Lawrence Hall in Ontario, and Africville in Halifax, Nova Scotia, among other long-established sites.

DOES QUEBEC GIVE ENOUGH RECOGNITION TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF BLACKS?

Strangely enough, Quebec is tentative in this regard, despite the crucial importance of Blacks in its history. For example, among the important sites in the city of Montreal, the Maison d'Haïti is a jewel in the eastern part of the metropolis. The settlement trajectory of the various waves of Haitian immigrants led to the establishment of Maison d'Haïti in this part of the city, transforming a community initiative into a pivotal institution. However, the contribution of the city's blacks could also be recognized in the west of the city, acknowledging the presence of citizens with roots dating back hundreds of years before the arrival of the Haitian immigrants.

FOR A RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF AFRICAN CANADIANS IN MONTREAL: LITTLE BURGUNDY OR THE HEART OF AFRO-MONTREAL HISTORY

LITTLE BURGUNDY, A KEY URBAN SPACE FOR RECOGNIZING BLACK QUEBECERS?

Little Burgundy saw its first black inhabitants congregate there in the 1820s. Rejected by Protestant churches and other predominantly white associations, they created their own institutions, including the Coloured Women's Club of Montreal, the Union Congregational Church, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the Negro Community Centre (NCC). Their contributions propelled the city onto the world stage, among other grass root activities, through jazz. The Rockhead's Paradise bar, which made the neighborhood vibrate, turned Montreal into one of the three major North American centers in this genre, along with Chicago and New Orleans. The giants who crossed the border included Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Lead Belly, Nina Simone, Fats Waller, Dizzy Gillespie and Sammy Davis Jr. It is in this fertile territory that the Festival de Jazz de Montréal was able to develop from 1980 onwards, to become the largest jazz festival in the world and certainly a source of pride for all Montrealers.

Today, with the urban transformation of the city's downtown areas, Little Burgundy has seen many of its historically black residents leave for other areas. From the point of view of the symbolic importance of the territory, it is imperative to ask how this rich history is now being recognized. Apart from the examples of toponymic recognition, including the names of streets, parks or squares, and the obscure plaques or sealed archives of Concordia University, in which other settings and in which institutions is this vibrant culture celebrated?

In the same way that heritage institutions, such as the Segal Centre within the Cummings Centre or the Casa d'Italia, house permanent exhibits on the Jewish and Italian communities of Montreal and Canada, what spaces in Montreal could do justice to the history and impact of its Black communities? From this standpoint, Little Burgundy would be a prime location to highlight the important role played by Blacks in Quebec, for Quebecers and Montrealers alike, as well as for the many tourists visiting the city attracted by the charms of multiculturalism. In this decade for people of African descent, doesn't the recognition of Black Quebecers require the establishment of a heritage site in Quebec?

In liberal societies, minority communities benefit either from symbolic recognition or from initiatives aimed at socio-economic redistribution (Honneth and Frazer, 2003). An anti-racist perspective that connects and reconciles these approaches acknowledges the need for "real recognition" (Manaï, 2015), particularly in and through institutions (Manaï and Bensiali, 2019). The Decade for People of African descent is an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of the black condition through the symbolic recognition of Quebec's black communities, and Montreal is the natural setting for this. At a time when Quebec has seen a Black woman rise to the head of the Quebec Liberal Party and the recent social questioning with #BlackLivesMatters, it seems more necessary than ever to grasp the complexity of the Black experience in order to achieve not only recognize, real emancipation.

REFERENCES

Armony, Victor, Mariam Hassaoui & Massimiliano Mulone, 2019, aout. *Les interpellations policières à la lumière des identités racisées des personnes interpellées: Analyse des données du Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) et élaboration d'indicateurs de suivi en matière de profilage racial*, Rapport final remis au SPVM, 134 p. spvm.qc.ca/upload/Rapport_Armony-Hassaoui-Mulone.pdf.

Frazer, Nancy & Axel Honneth, 2003. *Redistribution or recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, New York, Verso, 276 p.

Lamour, Ricardo, 2018, 4 juin. "SLĀV": une controverse évitable? [entrevue]. Dans *24/60*. Société Radio-Canada. Accessed March 10. ici.radio-canada.ca/tele/24-60/site/episodes/410839/canicule-morts-slav-esclavage-adolescents-grotte.

Manaï, Bochra, 2015. Mise en visibilité de l'ethnicité maghrébine à Montréal. Le cas du Petit-Maghreb. *Diversité urbaine* 15, no 1: 109-124. https://doi.org/10.7202/1037874ar.

Manaï, Bochra & Célia Bensiali, 2019. Penser l'antiracisme au quotidien. In L. Rachedi & B. Taibi (dir.), *L'intervention interculturelle* (3rd ed.). Montreal: Gaëtan Morin/Chenelière Éducation

Maynard, Robyn, 2018. *NoirEs sous surveillance: Esclavage, répression et violence d'État au Canada* [trad. Catherine Ego], Montreal, Mémoire d'encrier, 456 p.

Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés Culturelles, 2010. *Portrait statistique de la population noire recensée au Québec en 2006*. Gouvernement du Québec. Special compilation from Statistics Canada. www.quebecinterculturel.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/diversite-ethnoculturelle/com-noire-2006.pdf.

Nations Unies, 2014, Feb 7. 68th session. *Résolution A/RES/68/237, 2013. Proclamation de la Décennie internationale des personnes d'ascendance africaine*, on the United Nations website. https://undocs.org/fr/A/RES/68/237.

Nicolas, Émilie, 2020, hiver. Maîtres chez l'Autre, *Revue Liberté*, no. 326, on the website Revue Liberté. Accessed May 5, 2020. revueliberte.ca/article/1430/Maîtres_chez_l_Autre.

Pierre, Myrlande, 2019, 29 mars. Les Noirs du Canada: Éradiquer le racisme structurel, on the website *Options politiques*. Accessed April 10, 2020. https://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/soumission-darticles-a-options-politiques.

Statistique Canada, 2019. *Diversité sur la population noire au canada: un aperçu*, produit no 89-657-X au catalogue de Statistique Canada, Ottawa, Statistique Canada, 22 p. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019002-fra.pdf.

MOSTLY YOUNG, MARGINALIZED AND VILIFIED:

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION AND WELLBEING OF BLACK YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

Carl E. James holds the Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community & Diaspora in the Faculty of Education, York University, Toronto. His scholarly interests include examination of how race, ethnicity, gender, class and immigrant status / citizenship intersect and mediate schooling opportunities and educational outcomes of racialized and Black students. His forthcoming publications include: Colour Matters: Essays on the Experiences, Education and Pursuits of Black Youth.

INTRODUCTION

A recent Statistics Canada (February 2019) report indicates that in 2016, children under 15 years old represented 26.6% of the Black population, while only 16.9% of the Canadian population were in that age group.[1] Given that such a significant proportion (slightly more than one-quarter) of the Black population are students engaged in their foundational education, schooling has a considerable effect on the cultural, social, economic and political welfare of Black communities in Canada. And insofar as schooling institutions have long been contributing to the marginalization, racialization and vilification of Black youth (James, 2012; James & Turner, 2017), it is understandable that there would be considerable concern with Black youths' educational and social trajectories. In reflecting on this reality, I explore the educational experiences of Black youth noting how through the years, antiblackness – the disregard for Black humanity, psychic hurt, and educational, social and cultural wellbeing of Black students (Dumas, 2016) – has been used in the sorting of Black students into status-differentiated educational programs that have structured their life in school, school credentials and educational outcomes (Domina, Penne, Penner, 2017).

THE SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION OF BLACK STUDENTS

From the 1970s and every decade since, studies of the educational experiences and achievements of Black youth have shown that compared to their White peers, Black students in the Toronto Board of Education (TBE)[2], for instance, are more likely to be enrolled in *Basic* (or the lowest) level of educational programs rather than an advanced program of study which would prepare them for greater educational and occupational opportunities – including postsecondary studies (see Deosaran, 1976; Wright & Tsuji, 1982). Further, a 1991 study of TBE students showed that 74% of all students, but only 55% of Black students were studying at the advanced level, and that Black students were more likely to plan on attending college rather than university (Cheng et al, 1993). Studies by independent researchers in cities such as Halifax, Edmon-

1 The median age of the Black population is said to be 29.6 years compared to 40.7 years for the total Canadian population.

2 TBE was the only school board in the country to provide information based on race, but region or country of birth was used to assign racial identification – for Black students, it was "the West Indies and Guyana."

ton, and Montreal – also showed a similar schooling situation for Black students (Codjoe, 2001; Kakembo & Upshaw, 1998; Kelly, 1998). In fact, speaking to the situation of students in Halifax, Castor Williams, chair of the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) said that African Nova Scotian students were experiencing, "a discordant education system that is devoid of any effective policies essential and sympathetic to their needs" (BLAC 1994, p. 13).

Fast forward to the 2000s, the schooling situation for Black students remains the same. For instance, in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB),[3] there was a 25% difference between Black (55%) and their white and other racialized (80%) counterparts' enrollment in the board's Academic Program of Study; and Black (8%) students were more likely than their counterparts (3%) to be in the lowest level of study (Basic). As in earlier years, Black youth were less likely to pursue post-secondary studies; and those who did, more often chose to attend college. Black students also dropped out of school and were suspended and expelled from school at higher rates than other students (James & Turner 2017; Szekely & Pessian, 2015). Further analysis reveals that third generation Black students – mostly of Caribbean descent – were most likely to be in an Applied Program, while first and second generation – most of them of African descent – were mostly in Applied and Essential programs (James, in press).

The educational programs in which Black youth were/are likely to be found and expected to learn, are sustained by schooling environments in which racial stereotypes or profiling, disproportionate discipline, bullying, schooling disruption and educators who question their social behaviours and their capacity for learning and commitment to education. In fact, recent news reports in many areas of the country tell of the inequitable treatments, punitive disciplinary measures, and harmful bullying that Black students experience in schools. Royer-Burkett (2019) tells of her 5-year-old son being stereotyped by his teacher as "a safety hazard, aggressive and violent." And she recounts the experiences of other parents whose kindergarten and elementary aged sons were suspended from school, noting that "there is an inherent bias that is ignored in how Black youth are being disciplined in our schools." Similarly, in Ottawa, Richard Sharpe[4] recalls how his son was suspended both in elementary and in high school which was a "common experience for Black families" (Paradkar, 2019). And in Edmonton, a mother alleged that her 11-year old son was "racially profiled" when he was asked by a school official, a retired police officer, in his Catholic school if the red durag "indicated that the boy was affiliated with a gang" (Issawi, 2019).[5]

One Montreal mother whose son was "the target of numerous racist attacks" – including being called "the n-word" by peers – insisted that this was a consequence of "the systemic racism at the school that they don't want to admit" (CTV, 2019). And in Halifax, Nova Scotia two grade 12 students who have had enough of the "hurt" and "put down" of being "called the n-word," have acted by making presentations to peers hoping to discourage the use of the n-word (CBC Kids News, 2019). The use of racist epigraphs also caused some students to change schools due to feeling unsafe. One Vancouver student who complained to school authorities about feeling unsafe at her high school because of the obscenities and threats directed at "Black people" from a fellow student on social media, was told that "you're going to have to deal with it." This response of the failure by school authorities, as the reporter writes, "to take action to ensure the safety" of Black students "raises important questions about the response to racism by the school, the Vancouver School Board and police" (Hyslop, 2019).

Undoubtedly, such schooling environments not only contribute to the educational outcome and social welfare of students, but also to their life circumstances such as their contacts with the justice system. The case of a 20-something Black man who was charged with running from police and found with a gun is worth referencing here. It is a case in which Justice S. Nakatsuru (R v. Morris, 2018), who, after taking into account the "expert evidence" and "social history" of the accused, in his ruling cited "systemic failures" in the education of this youth. His education, according to the judge, failed to provide the youth what he needed to deal with the social and economic challenges in his life. Justice Nakatsuru also writes:

> "Anti-Black racism has shaped your life in a way that has brought you into the criminal court… You did not find a way out through the public education system. I have no doubt that anti-Black racism affected how you were treated in school… I am not saying that your teachers were racist, uncaring, or that you do not share

3 Starting in 2008, Toronto District School Board has been the only School Board in Canada that collects race-based data. In 2018/19 other public school boards in the GTA collected data of their student population, but at the time of writing, have not made their findings public. It is important to note that the Catholic school – even in the Toronto area where there is a culture of collecting race-based data – have not moved to do the same. And except for Nova Scotia, this practice has not been adopted in other school boards in Canada's provinces.

4 In the *Toronto Star* article, Paradkar (2019) recounts the discriminatory experiences of three generations of the male members of the Sharpe family in three different Ontario school boards. Sharpe's son, the third generation, was suspended from his high school for, according to the suspension note, "persistent opposition to authority."

5 The mother is seeking to get an apology from the school.

> responsibility. Rather, I am recognizing the studies that show systemically that racism exists and has not served Black children well. That failure in the education system makes a child vulnerable to becoming involved in the criminal justice system" (page 15, #74)

Recognizing these problems, the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent – which made an official visit to Canada in October 2016 and consulted with Black community members on human rights issues – recommended, among other things, that Canadian schools need to "implement a nationwide African Canadian education strategy to address the inordinately low educational attainment, high drop-out rates, suspensions and expulsions experienced by African Canadian children and youth." And in order to provide young people the knowledge which will enable them to have productive lives, the Working Group also recommends that to avoid "negative stereotypes" that Black students encounter in their schooling, textbooks and other educational materials must provide accurate information about Black peoples' presence and history in Canada (United Nations Human Rights, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Many within the Black communities have long advocated for changes in the education system that would address the anti-Black racism to which Black students and parents are subjected. For members recognize that the welfare of their communities is connected to the education that Black students obtain at the early stages of life. Indeed, the schooling environments in which Black students are to be found and expected to learn are sustained by an interlocking set of stereotypes, teacher low expectations, streaming into lower level educational programs, lack of culturally relevant and responsive curricula, differential treatment, and lack of Black teachers who could show interest in them, act as role models, and address the absence of Black presence or history in the curriculum (James & Turner, 2017). There is certainly an urgency that educators come to recognize, and like Justice Nakatsuru admit, that the educational situation of Black students is a consequence of a system that has failed – and continues to fail – to address their needs, interests, issues and concerns, and those of their families and communities.

REFERENCES

Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) (1994). *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequality – Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee.

CBC Kids News. (2019, May 15). They used to hurt me: Teens talk about being called the N Word. *CBC Kids News*. Accessed 2019 May 20. www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/they-used-it-to-hurt-me-teens%20talk-about-being-called-the-n-word

Cheng, M., Yau, M. & Zeigler, S. (1993) *The 1991 Every Student Survey, Part 11: Detailed Profiles of Toronto's Secondary School Students*. Toronto: Research Services, Toronto Board of Education.

Codjoe, H.M. (2001). Fighting a "public enemy" of Black academic achievement: The persistence of racism and the schooling experiences of Black students in Canada. *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 4 (4), 343-375

CTV Montreal. (2019, January 27). Mother says elementary school won't take action after Racist Incidents against Son. *CTV Montreal*. Accessed may 15, 2019. https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/mother-says-elementary-school-won-t-take-action-after-racist-incidents-against-son-1.4271206

Deosaran, R.A. (1976). *The 1975 Every Student Survey: Program placement related to selected countries of birth and selected languages* #140. Toronto: Research Department, The Board of Education.for the City of Toronto.

Domas M.J. (2016). Against the Dark: Antiblackness n Education Policy and Discourse. *Theory into Practice* 55: 11-19.

Domina, T., Penner, A. & Penner, E. (2017). Categorical Inequality: Schools as sorting machines. *Annual Review of Sociology* 43 311-330.

Hyslop, Katie. (2019, September 11). How a Black Student Paid the Price for Racism at a Vancouver School. *The Tyee*. Accessed September 20, 2019: https://thetyee.ca/News/2019/09/11/Vancouver-School-Racist-Video/

Issawi, H. (2019, November 1) Edmonton mother banned from son's school takes fight to province, *The Star Edmonton*. Accessed November 2, 2019. www.thestar.com/edmonton/2019/11/01/edmonton-mother-banned-from-sons-school-takes-fight-to-province.html

James, C.E. (in press). *"Colour Matters": Essays on the Experiences, Education and Pursuits of Black Youth*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

James, C.E. & Turner, T. (2017). *Towards Race Equity in Education: The schooling of Black students in the GTA*. The Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community & Diaspora, Faculty of Education, York University (April). http://edu.yorku.ca/files/2017/04/Towards-Race-Equity-in-Education-April-2017.pdf

James, C.E. (2012). Students "at risk": Stereotyping and the schooling of Black boys. *Urban Education*. 47 (2), 464-494.

Kakembo, P. & Upshaw, R. (1998). The emergence of the Black Learners Advisory Committee in Nova Scotia. In V.R. D'Oyley & C.E. James (eds.) *Re/Visioning: Canadian Perspectives on the Education of Africans in the late 20th Century*, pp. 140-158. Toronto: Captus Press.

Kelly, J. (1998). *Under the Gaze: Learning to be Black in a White Society*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Paradkar, S. (2019, September 6). As a Black student, he was told to dream small. He had hoped things would change for his son. *The Toronto Star*. Accessed October 14, 2019. www.thestar.com/news/atkinsonseries/2019/09/06/as-a-black-student-he-was-told-to-dream-small-but-he-hoped-things-would-change-for-his-son.html

R. v. Morris, 2018 ONSC 5186, Court File No.: CR-16-30000214-000, 20180911

Royer-Burkett, K. (2019, May 13). The safety epidemic facing Black Children in Ontario schools. *By Blacks*. Accessed May 22, 2019. https://byblacks.com/main-menu-mobile/news-%20mobile/item/2295-the%20safety-epidemic-facing-black-children-in-ontario-school

Szekely, R & Pessian, P. (2015, August 6). Parents warn black youth are being racially profiled in Durham schools. *Durhamregion.com* Accessed October 31, 2019. www.durhamregion.com/news-story/5787027-parents-warn-black-youth-are-being-racially-profiled-in-durham-schools/

Statistics Canada. (2019, February 27). Diversity of the Black population in Canada: An overview. *Statistics Canada: Ethnicity, Language and Immigration Thematic Series*. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019002-eng.pdf?st=AFWC5i9t

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner (2016). *Statement to the media by the united nations' working group of experts on people of African descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to Canada, 17-21, October 2016*. Accessed Oct., 30, 2019. www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20732&LangID=E

Wright, E.N. & Tsuji, G.K. (1982). The Grade Nine Student Survey, Fall 1982. #173. Toronto: Research Department. The Board of Education for the City of Toronto.

ACROSS THE BORDER

Komi Olaf

THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

"It's been terrifying to bear witness to a rise in xenophobic and racist conduct during a time when solidarity and cooperation within and across nations are so sorely needed. Reports of violence, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin and religion all over the world paint a grim picture. For some Indigenous Peoples, the threat is existential. Reports have also laid bare the meaning and persistence of structural racism."

– E. Tendayi Achiume, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance.

DECADES OF PSYCHOSOMATIC TRAUMA FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

WHY SHOULD WE KEEP TALKING ABOUT IT?

Born into a modest and militant Haitian family, **Darlène Lozis** was introduced early to social activism. Darlène works at the Public Service Alliance of Canada, as the national coordinator of oppression prevention. She lives with her family in the National Capital Region. Her own activism, as a young adult, began consciously in Port-au-Prince, Haiti around 1997, with *Les servantes de Dieu* (the maidservants of God), an organization whose goal was to guide and support street children (girls and boys) aged between 6 and 17 years old. Darlène has volunteered with several local and national organizations: CALACS, Centraide Outaouais, Jaku Konbit and Canada Haiti Action Network, among others.

Since the great MAAFA on the Kamita continent, the Kémit people are doing their utmost to survive while at the same time trying to come to terms with the burden imposed on them and which connects them with their fellow human beings, some of whom were formerly their tormentors.

These psychosomatic traumas, experienced, rarely discussed and in some respects even avoided, have serious consequences both for Afro-descendants as well as for the descendants of former settlers. The reasons behind the failure to come to grips with the lived experience and eventual healing of the descendants of settlers and Africans are many. On both sides, the history has been obscured, whether consciously or not. We do not intend to dwell on these reasons here, as they are multiple and will not serve our present interest.

However, we consider it necessary, even imperative, to recount the sequelae, that have thus far been minimized, but that have had a very serious impact on the health and psyche of Afro-descendants throughout the world. We will highlight three aspects that are relevant and fundamental to the necessary process of healing, so that we can combine rhetoric with action.

COLLECTIVE WOUNDS

The first consists in recognizing the collective wounds that resulted from and are intrinsically tied to post-colonial traumas. Here we refer to the fact that, as a result of past wounds, the future of all people of African and Aboriginal

descent is marked by indelible scars. Like it or not, the colonial past defines both their social integration and their present socio-economic situations.

Sociological research clearly demonstrates this and indicates that there is still much work to be done to remedy the discrimination, harassment and socio-economic insecurity that Afro-descendants experience. Beyond these physical and psychological prejudices, racialized people still feel obliged to defend and justify their precariousness on a regular basis, too often misunderstood and minimized in political debates. Being forced to endure such discrimination on a daily basis leads some Afro-descendants to turn their back on their reality and their identity, in order to avoid being socially stigmatized.

Others, on the other hand, do everything possible to educate, inform, conduct scientific research to document the past and present experiences of racialized groups, with a view to restoring truth and reconciliation, wherever there is an opportunity to do so. Some intellectuals are convinced that information campaigns have the power to play a role in the collective healing process, since these efforts are aimed at the entire world population. The idea is also to remove the misplaced guilt of some Afro-descendants over the transatlantic slave trade that endangered several African societies. Indeed, this misplaced guilt is generated by the deliberate misinformation spread by reactionary and racist groups. Their desire to undermine the claims of oppressed groups raises the following question: what is there to gain from the unconscionable exclusion of some members of our society, when this exclusion harms not only the groups in question but their very ability to build a better future for generations to come?

There can be no doubt that history must serve as a basis for collective understanding and healing. By opting for a frank and open social discussion, we ensure a better understanding of the poverty of racialized groups, their current needs and the appropriate way to remedy their socio-economic precariousness. The United Nations has understood the urgency of rectifying history and advocating for international dialogue by proclaiming the International Decade for People of African Descent in General Assembly resolution 68/237, to be observed from 2015 to 2024. This sets the right tone for Western Governments and, in so doing, makes possible recognition on an international scale of the realities lived by Afro-descendants and their ancestors, realities that have been repeatedly highlighted by historians, researchers, intellectuals and racialized communities around the world.

Several experts, including psychologist Linda James-Myers, explain how difficult it is for black people, who are forced to deal on a daily basis with hidden, multiple, compounded and ongoing discriminatory attitudes based on intersecting factors such as age, gender, language, religion, political opinion, social origin, disability and other forms of prejudice. It is vital to make an account of these racist acts against blacks, rooted in ignorance and the denial of historical facts. Wherever school curricula take account of both the realities of discrimination and the diverse and rich contributions made by Afro-descendants to Western societies, we can consider ourselves to be participating in a real collective effort at inclusion and the building of a promising future.

HEALING OF THE SOUL

Second, we must define and identify the tools that are essential to a genuine healing of the collective soul. By soul, we mean the state of mind of the racialized person who has been a victim of racism on an institutional and/or individual basis. Without this psychosomatic repair, even the resilient individual will have difficulty confronting the demands of his/her society.

We address this issue in a way that draws inspiration from the therapeutic, scientific philosophy of those African Ancestors who believed, and with good reason, that healing is only possible when we honour the Nature's fundamental principle – that the healing of all beings must be essentially three-dimensional. Psychological renewal becomes a reality on the condition that one heals the body, the spirit (soul) and the environment of the subject, caught in the quagmire of mental distress. In this context, genuine social change is dependent on ensuring the healing of marginalized groups, social redress, recognition of the contributions of these groups to the socio-economic development of societies that have benefited from their presence, and reconciliation, through institutional programmes aimed at restoring social justice.

This doctrine, which dates back to time immemorial, is at the heart of all individual and collective recovery. It is imperative, therefore, that we ensure that this social awakening, this cultural change, is manifest in the most minor decision of the state, in the judicial system, in the educational field, etc.

ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITIES

Thirdly, historical recognition is not enough; appropriate social measures, public consultations to better identify the challenges faced by members of minority groups, the collection of disaggregated data to grasp the extent of racism in Canadian society, among other things, are obviously required. A number of research projects highlight the inequalities that racialized communities face on a daily basis. Indeed, all the studies converge in one direction: people of African descent continue to have limited participation in the political sphere, and access to influential positions in major public and private institutions. We would add that both national and international studies highlight the limited access to adequate

housing, social security and quality health services, as well as the overrepresentation of black and indigenous men in correctional settings, and of their youth in juvenile institutions, exacerbated by racial profiling.

What can be done about these issues? In spite of these many social obstacles, it is important to focus on the numerous studies that have been conducted and the coordinated actions carried out by community groups, citizens' groups, and activist groups all calling for deep reflection, towards bringing about change for the groups who continue to be victims of racism. In addition, the International Decade for People of African Descent has prompted some Western governments to review their policies and programmes in support of racialized groups. Canada has moved in this direction at both the provincial and federal levels. Municipalities have also committed to collecting data that can help understand the extent of racial profiling, for example. Other initiatives are underway to understand the needs of incarcerated racialized people. Interventions are multiple and ongoing, though they have not yet succeeded in transforming the discriminatory system we have been navigating for decades. The slow pace is understandable, as any real social change requires a serious collective reassessment that shakes things up. An enduring political will, brought about by the tenacity of marginalized groups and their allies, will ultimately make this social change possible.

Our societies are continuously evolving, customs are quietly changing, but raising social awareness remains a necessary and never-ending endeavour. We are aware that perfection is utopian, however, the desire to move society forward to create an inclusive, just and equitable community must become a dream to be shared by all, the ultimate goal.

We must continue to keep a close eye on the initiatives undertaken by our politicians, legislators, private and community decision-makers to make the dream come true. We must insist on better integration, on providing a fair chance for future generations. Incarcerating black youth in an oppressive system, while depriving them of the necessary tools and of hope for a potentially better future, inevitably ensures their decline and acts as an impediment to the socio-economic development of racialized communities.

We conclude this essay with the wise words of Martin Luther King:

> "Today, in the darkness of the world and in hope, I affirm my faith in the future of humanity. I refuse to believe that present circumstances render men incapable of making a better earth. I refuse to share the opinion of those who claim that man is so captive in the night that the dawn of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I believe that truth and love, without conditions, will indeed have the last word. Life, even if temporarily defeated, is always stronger than death. I firmly believe that there is still hope for a bright morning, I believe that peaceful kindness will one day become the law. Every man will be able to sit under his fig tree, in his vineyard, and no one will have any reason to be afraid."

A better world is possible, but only if we desire it to be so.

WE BELONG: BLACK WOMEN CREATIVES AFFIRMING BLACKNESS THROUGH ART

Born in Kenya, and raised in both Germany and Kenya, **Atieno Odera** has had an international education since birth. Her dual education in Europe and Africa gave Atieno a unique experience before choosing to attend UBC. After completing the Coordinated Arts Program, Lilian completed a bachelor's in media studies, and began exploring her interests in communications, and how technology and media inform the way we think today. Atieno was an executive of the UBC Africa Awareness Initiative, where she planned the annual four day Conference Week to promote the UBC African Studies Program.

On the west facing wall of 258 Union Street on the downtown east side of Vancouver stands a vibrant mural depicting a happy black family playing music together while their ancestors watch from above. Both celebratory and melancholic, the mural commemorates the historic site of what used to be Hogan's Alley, a neighbourhood that was home to a large number of Black Canadians in Vancouver until 1970. The untitled mural that honors the black community, present and past, is on the site where the home of Nora Hendrix once stood – the celebrated community leader and grandmother to the legendary rock star Jimi Hendrix. What used to be a flourishing community of black businesses, residences and the only black church in Vancouver, the African Methodist Episcopal Fountain Chapel, the destruction of Hogan's Alley represented not only the loss of home, but also that of community and a unified sense of identity. It is a loss that is still felt in the streets of Vancouver half a century later.

People of African-descent make up roughly 1.2% of Vancouver's population, which is only slightly lower than the national total of 4%. The black experience in Vancouver is constantly challenged by those who seek to maintain its invisibility. It is on one hand characterized by fragmentation, tokenization and racism and on the other, also being positively redefined by creatives and activists seeking to assert the presence of blackness. A conversation with three Black Women Artists in Vancouver unveiled their thinking about the current social and cultural landscape of the black community in Vancouver.

The creator of the Hogan's Alley Mural, Ejiwa "Edge" Ebenebe affirms that black creatives are powerful, untamable and loud: their collective voice to change how people of African descent are perceived in Vancouver will inevitably be listened to. This is a sentiment shared by the South African poet Palesa Koitsioe and self-proclaimed self-care and wellness artist, Dora Kamau.

"Being black is an important part of my life because it affects the way people see me and treat me. It's essential who I am but it's not all that I am," says Edge. Her body of illustrations, which she describes as amorphous, feature magical black women in fantastical settings. She is inspired by her own personal experiences as an openly queer black woman in Vancouver carving out her space, and her artistic style speaks to this through bold strokes and bright colors that demand to be seen. She asks and challenges through her art: "Is it harder to relate to black people?" She describes her vision behind the mural was to highlight the ordinariness of black people. Indeed, black people are expected to be strong, resilient and for black women, there is the image of a magical black goddess, as popularized on social media with the hashtag #BlackGirlMagic. However, deification is still dehumaniza-

tion that situates whiteness within the normalcy of humanness. Rather than confine her craft to a tool for diversity schemes, she asserts that she aims to capture the holistic lived experience of black communities: more than struggle and pain, she also captures joy, love, family, community and belonging.

It is black creatives and community leaders who take the lead when it comes to the representation of blackness in Vancouver, since the local government and established brands often only engage with blackness when it comes to diversity campaigns or Black History Month in February. Such lackluster engagement with the black community results in pigeonholing black creatives' abilities and talents that serve not to capture a holistic black experience, but to fulfill capitalistic agendas geared towards profiting off 'diversity' representations.

The more sinister consequence of inadequate engagement or involvement with members of the black community concerns the mental health and general wellbeing of black Vancouverites. In recent months, Dora Kamau's revolutionary approach to art as a healing vessel has proven to be high in demand, especially for black women and women of color.

As a self-care and wellness artist, Dora has identified that there exists an internal conflict for black Vancouverites to either conform to whiteness or stick to their roots. Her practice, which mainly comprises informational workshops, is informed by her previous work as a psychiatric nurse and is aimed at creating safe spaces for black women and other women of color to practice self-care and self-love. She states, "It was really a yearning for a space or community where we could have authentic and meaningful conversations... to train and hold space for women who might not have anyone in their life to talk to or feel shame or feel judgement about the things they're going through." There exists a permeating sense of loneliness that leaves people of African descent, of both immigrant and generational settler backgrounds, vulnerable to systemic challenges and health related factors, including mental health in Vancouver. Dora's work therefore is a testament to the critical work being done by black people for black people to create a heightened sense of belonging and a healthier way of being.

Palesa moved to Vancouver about 3 years ago from South Africa. She further reiterates the challenges of finding a community in Vancouver. It was through her spoken word poetry that she was able to find a community that fulfilled her. She defines relationships among Vancouverites to be in a constant state of transition, where people are either very new to Vancouver or about to leave the city. Her poetry, her art that she honed and practiced even before her arrival to Vancouver, became her gateway to share herself with her community and allow them to practice vulnerability with her. By sharing intimate pieces about her life, she has received applause and tears from those who endured the same and those who witness her truth. Beyond the gendered experience of race that goes ignored, Palesa articulates the necessity of artistic spaces that allow individuals to be seen and to exist in spite of their racial background. Even as she contemplates the future of the artistic and cultural landscape of Vancouver, she notes that Vancouver presents tremendous potential: "As more and more black people come into Vancouver, people in general are going to be able to grow a little better and understand who they are."

Through their art, these three phenomenal women speak truth to power and affirm blackness in Vancouver. Indeed, there are plenty of black artists in Vancouver who engage in similar work: from musicians such as Tonye Aganaba, self-made diversity consultants such as Cicely Belle, Social Justice Doulas who educate and radicalize, and even other illustrators like Pearl Low who share heart-warming snippets of daily life in Vancouver. In a city where the physical and representational presence of blackness is constantly pushed to the margins, we live in a climate where a rising black population consistently challenges preconceived notions about blackness. There is optimism that in the future blackness can thrive openly and freely and be in conversation with indigeneity so as to move towards a community building that is anti-colonial, revolutionary and liberating. It is no coincidence that Black and/or Queer women are at the lead, for their identities have eternally been at the intersections where these systemic oppressions play out the most. As the non-profit community organization, Hogan's Alley Society, embarks on a project to establish a cultural centre that will act as a common gathering space for black Vancouverites, it is imperative to acknowledge the artistic and healing work being done by Black Women and Femmes.

The great Toni Morrison summed up the power of art and its role in community best when, in 2013 at Vanderbilt University, she echoed the following words: "Art invites us to take the journey beyond price, beyond costs into bearing witness to the world as it is and as it should be. Art invites us to know beauty and to solicit it from even the most tragic of circumstances. Art reminds us that we belong here. And if we serve, we last. My faith in art rivals my admiration for any other discourse. Its conversation with the public and among its various genres is critical to the understanding of what it means to care deeply and to be human completely. I believe."

MELANATED
Fatuma Kou

BALLERINA
Fatuma Kou

HOW DO YOU SEE ME?

"The voices calling for an end to the killings of unarmed African Americans need to be heard. The voices calling for an end to police violence need to be heard.

Procedures must change, prevention systems must be put in place, and above all police officers who resort to excessive use of force should be charged and convicted for the crimes committed... The role that entrenched and pervasive racial discrimination plays in such deaths must also be fully examined, properly recognized and dealt with (May-June 2020)."

– Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

THE VISIBILITY PARADOX IN BLACK CANADIAN LGBTQ2S+ COMMUNITIES

Cicely Belle Blain is an award-winning activist, writer and diversity and inclusion consultant based in Vancouver, BC. They are a founder of Black Lives Matter Vancouver, for which they were listed as one of Vancouver's 50 most powerful people and 150 Black women and non-binary people making change across Canada. Since founding their consulting business in 2018, they have been listed as one of BC's 30 under 30 business leaders and a finalist for the Canadian LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Cicely Belle is also an instructor in Executive Leadership at Simon Fraser University, a board member with PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and a Dialogue Associate with the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue.

INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES

Black people make up around 3.5% of the Canadian population[1] and although slightly harder to count due to variations in census questions and identification, LGBTQ2s+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two Spirit) people make up around 3.2% of the population.

Marginalized groups are often posited against one another; seen by mainstream culture as two entirely separate communities, furthering differing agendas. This binary presents a false and harmful narrative, particularly for those who belong to both.

Those who live at the intersection of these two marginalized identities – those who are both Black and LGBTQ2S+, experience the compounding effects of systemic and interpersonal racism, anti-Blackness, homophobia, and transphobia.

I am a Black, queer, non-binary femme living on unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh lands (also known as Vancouver, BC). My identity is shaped not by being each of these things individually, but by being all of them, all of the time. It is necessary to me, therefore, that when we explore Black Canadian identity and inclusion, that we understand those who exist outside of the cisnormative, heteropatriarchal mainstream. It is necessary that we apply a framework of intersectionality to celebrating the Decade for People of African Descent.

Intersectionality, as coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, shows us how discrimination is overlapping and cannot be examined separately for people who exist in multiple marginalized identities[2]. For myself, as a Black, queer, non-binary person, Crenshaw's framing of intersectionality perfectly draws attention to the missing link in many attempts at inclusion, justice and liberation. Namely,

1 Statistics Canada, "Census Profile, 2016 Census Vancouver [Population Centre], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province]," August 9, 2019.

2 Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics" University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989.

those who inhabit multiple oppressed identities experience unique challenges that can only be accommodated by intersectional liberation movements.

BLACK VISIBILITY IN VANCOUVER

Vancouver has a population of around 2.2 million people, around 1% of whom identify as Black or of African descent[3]. Being Black in Vancouver is an experience defined by the unique combination of invisibility and hypervisibility. Many Black Vancouverites can relate to the experience of being the only Black person in the room, receiving stares from passers-by and being tokenized to speak on behalf of their whole community. This is hypervisibility – an overwhelming experience of constantly being noticed, observed, interrogated, stereotyped, approached (or purposefully avoided).

In contrast, when we zoom out to our local government, organizational leadership, school curriculum, local media, decision-making entities, public dialogue – Blackness is almost completely absent. This is invisibility: a systematic erasure of Black people, Black voices, Black culture, and Black contributions to the shaping of our everyday lives.

Both the invisibility and visibility perpetuate the idea that Blackness does not belong in Vancouver – or even in Canada. The Black community are either 'exotic' and inherently foreign or too small to be significant. This specific framing of the Black experience can be linked back to systematic and intentional efforts to erase Black people from cities like Vancouver.

In the early 1970s, the Georgia Viaduct, a bridge connecting East Vancouver to Downtown finished construction. This City-led project forcibly evicted Vancouver's only Black settlement, known as Hogan's Alley, where approximately 800 Black people lived[4]. This monumental event in Canadian history is not unique; city planning has often been used as a tool to destroy Black communities in Canada, the most notable being Nova Scotia's Africville.[5]

The destruction of Hogan's Alley and the forceful displacement of Vancouver's Black community still hangs over Vancouver and its treatment of Black folks. This prominent historical example of erasure and anti-Blackness laid the foundation for a narrative where Black communities cannot thrive in Canadian cities. Contemporary Vancouver is not shy to invisibilizing Black people.

In contrast, the media we consume across North America is saturated with Black imagery. I know from personal experience attempting to enjoy Vancouver nightlife that the average Vancouverite can identify and regularly consumes more elements of Black culture than of any other culture and perhaps even their own. Rap, hip-hop, twerking, cornrows, gold chains, Beyonce lyrics, reggae, 'on fleek', jazz, blues, gospel – all staple consumables to any North American.

Watts and Orbe describe this as "spectacular consumption [that] arises in part out of the desire for white folk to reconstitute their identities through acts of black consumption"[6] or more concisely put by Amandla Stenberg, "What would [North] America be like if we loved Black people as much as we love Black culture?".[7]

THE DANGER OF THE VISIBILITY PARADOX

In the LGBTQ2S+ community the complexity of visibility also exists. Queer visibility is often referred to as a "double edged sword"[8]; the desire to be seen, heard, represented and validated in the fullness of one's identity after years of silencing or being closeted runs up against the dangers of being a target when visible.

For many who identify as LGBTQ2s+, image is important. Presentation and aesthetic considerations are more than superficial decisions; for many they are signals of deeply personal identity markers and life-affirmations. Particularly those who identify as non-binary, transgender or genderfluid, gender expression and presentation are key elements to a fulfilling life. Many people change their hair, clothes, make-up, hormones and bodies to feel and be seen as more like the gender they identify as.

When we look at these experiences through an intersectional lens, we can see the manifold challenges presented to those who identify as Black and LGBTQ2S+ in Canada. Black

3 Statistics Canada, "Census Profile, 2016 Census Vancouver [Population Centre], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province]," August 9, 2019,

4 *10 Video Stories about Vancouver's Black Community.* Black Strathcona.

5 Richard, Mallory. *The Story of Africville*. Canadian Museum of Human Rights.

6 Watts, Eric King, and Mark Orbe. *The Spectacular Consumption of 'True' African American Culture: 'Whassup' with the Budweiser Guys?"*Critical Studies in Media Communication 19, no. 1 (2002).

7 Aguirre, Abby. "Amandla Stenberg Is a Voice for the Future." *Vogue*, May 26, 2017.

8 Tensley, Brandon. "The Double-Edged Sword of Queer Visibility." *Pacific Standard*, June 28, 2017.

Canadians are, in most towns and cities, already hypervisible meaning that Black LGBTQ2s+ people have this experience exacerbated.

This heightened visibility brings with it a greater risk of violence. Black transgender women, being among the most visible, experience some of the highest rates of violence in North America.[9] The freedom to live one's life in its truest sense is not afforded to people whose identities are hypervisible.

Canada is often seen as a leader in LGBTQ2s+ rights and inclusion but it is possible to argue that those freedoms are only afforded to white, cisgender gay men and not to those who experience multiple layers of oppression. Canada lacks significant data to tell us the experiences of this community, which further invisibilizes the struggle.

In 1969, Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender woman, threw the first brick at police officers as they violently raided the Stonewall Inn in New York City.[10] This was the birth of the modern-day Pride movement. In 2017, I lay on the hot concrete at an intersection in Vancouver's gay neighbourhood, protesting the involvement of police in Canadian Pride parades. I remember closing my eyes, dreaming of Marsha P. Johnson and thinking 'the struggle is not over until every member of the community is safe'.

9 Ignacio Torres, ABC News (ABC News Network, November 20, 2019).

10 Brockell, Gillian. "The Transgender Women at Stonewall Were Pushed out of the Gay Rights Movement. Now They Are Getting a Statue in New York." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, June 27, 2019.

MÉTIS AND/OR *AFRO-MÉTIS*: WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The 4th Poet Laureate of Toronto and the 7th Parliamentary (Canadian) Poet Laureate, **George Elliott Clarke** is also the E.J. Pratt Professor of Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto. Prized for his poetry and his pioneering study of African-Canadian Literature, Clarke is an Afro-Metis of Cherokee (matrilineal) and Mi'kmaq (patrilineal) lineages, he is a member of the Eastern Woodland Metis Nation Nova Scotia (whether any government approves or not).

Yes, my teasing essay title riffs on the refrain to Soul singer Jean Knight's smash hit, "Mr. Big Stuff" (1971)! However, the issue teased out herein doth ask our considered and most considerate meditation on nomenclature, *national* identity, and definition, all in relation to a racialized puzzle: Can the rubric, *Métis*, encapsulate that upstart neologism, *Afro-Métis?*[1] Or are the terms polarities, so that *Afro-Métis* is a parasitic arriviste upon the beleaguered host that is *Métis*?

Surely, the primary stumbling block to resolving the preceding interrogative is, evidently, that conjunction, "Afro" – African/Black – and *Métis*, a word that, in Canadian bureaucracy and jurisprudence, is interpreted as denominating those persons descended from "French and Scottish fur traders who married Aboriginal women..." ("*Métis* Nation"). Apparently, European ethnicity plus Indigenous "race"[2] is the prerequisite for the formation of *Métis* nations (at least in Canada), plus a historical connection to the fur trade in a defined, geopolitical territory:

> Distinct *Métis* communities developed along the fur trade routes. This *Métis* Nation Homeland includes the three Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta), as well as, parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Northern United States. ("*Métis* Nation")

Missing from the statist (and gussied up) history[3] and geography lessons are the complications of fact, such as the recognition that the fur-trade was *not* the only occupation that brought imperialist (and/or profit-seeking and/or refugee) Europeans into contact with racialized "others." There was also slavery, and that New France "industry" ensured that both Indigenous people and Africans[4] gave birth (*merci*, Caucasian fornicators) to *Métis* and/or to *Mulattos*. To adhere to the vaunted histories and genealogies of the *Métis* is to eschew the claims to such status of the progeny of, say, an Acadian farmer or a Montréal slave trader, who happened to impregnate Indigenous partners. According to the ruling-class definition cited above, neither the Acadian nor the *Montréalais* sire may increase a – or *the* – *Métis* Nation, even if the child/ren are – by definition, *métis* – i.e., "cross-bred" or "mixed-

1 See Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey.

2 To paraphrase scholar Ann duCille, French dudes gotta be so potent that one drop of their white semen turns a "Red" woman white and her babies brown. Cf. duCille (303-304).

3 What? There were zero instances of polygamy, polyandry, common-law shacking up, as well as sexual assault? Are the *Métis* only derived from legally sanctioned union? *Incroyable*!

4 Historian Robin Winks tells us that the colonial French enslaved Indigenous and African peoples and had cavalier intimacies with both: "The French settlers especially were attracted to Indian women, and 75.9% of all panis children were *batards*, while only 32.1% of Negro children were born out of wedlock" (11). He accepts that "Indian *and* Negro blood was mixed with French Canadian" (11, my emphasis).

race." How very Canadian this prejudice (pre-judgment) is! To utilize *occupation* (related to class) as well as *region* and *race/ethnicity* to essay to grant the identity of *métis* to folks only of European and Indigenous admixture, then to only one economic pursuit, and then to only one geographical territory (pretending, magically, that there was no fur-trade in Québec – despite the *coureurs du bois* – nor in Atlantic Canada, where beaver pelts were gold). Shades of John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic* (1965), which insists class stratification in Canada is based on *race*, ethnicity, and occupation, as well as territory.[5] Yet the term *métis* – like most words – is protean, and thus defiant of judicial or legislative constraint, and is as profligate as were the progenitors of the original *Métis* (and *Mulattos*). The fundamental issue? It seems impossible to copyright a people or to trademark their nomenclature...

Although that de *rigueur*, Canuck i.d. (definition) of the *Métis* exists – that the initial-majuscule word denotes persons who are as *red* and *white* in background as the Maple Leaf flag, and that they inhabit the "North-West" (Manitoba to British Columbia, with Ontario as a provisional add-on) – the word itself – just like *mulatto* – originates in French imperialism, and so its extant usage encompasses all the French Empire. So, one encounters *The Métis of Senegal* (Jones) as well as "*Métis* of Vietnam" (Firpo). Wherever French *pricks* (excuse the pun) penetrated and inseminated and impregnated "Natives" (of Africa, the Americas, and Asia) and/or *Noires*, the resultant live births would be classed as mulattos and quadroons, *métis* or *métif* and octoroons, *et cetera*, to suit a sophisticated scale of racial categorization (and stratification), operative in Louisiana as well as in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) and – I say – Nouvelle-France (Québec) – given its Indigenous and African slave populations. Witness a chart produced by Frederick Law Olmstead, demonstrating how "the French of the Southern [United] States classify the colored people, according to the greater or less preponderance of Negro blood..." (Reuter 12), including the categories of *Metif*[6] (designating offspring both "white and Quadroon") and "Meamelouc" (designating offspring both "white and *métif*") (Reuter 12). So, the French thought *métis*, at times, described persons of some Black/African/Negro/*Noir* heritage, *not* only those of Indigenous and European conjunction.

Then again, perhaps some *Black* Canadians merit the label of *Métis* as much as (or more than) the proponents of a Eurocentric-only (and thus pronouncedly Caucasian-rooted/*raced*) identity. For one thing, there were black fur-traders in colonial Québec as well as in the "North-West" and they, too, embraced Indigenous lovers who became moms. Mind film critic Michael Sicinski's resonant sagacity: "Every space... is hybridized from the start" (28). Thus, Frank Mackey's history of Black Montréal registers that the fur trade was "one of the principal channels through which blacks reached the city, or left it, as can be seen from the numerous references in this book to blacks owned or trafficked by fur traders" (197).[7] Mackey also provides bios for four black fur-traders, brothers Étienne and Pierre Bonga, and the latter's sons, George and Stephen[8] (198-201); the first-generation brothers Bonga travelled from Montréal to Nord-Ouest Ontario, and then to Manitoba. Pierre Bonga had four children "by a woman of the Indian country" (Mackey 198), and an image of him in a canoe served to inspire Afro-*Métis* poet Troy Burle Bailey's experimental collection, *The Pierre Bonga Loops* (2010). Clearly, the only way that Pierre Bonga, et al., can be blocked from being viewed as full-blooded *Métis* (so to speak) is due the absence of a white European forebear. For his part, Colin A. Thomson records the exploits of Alberta's "Nigger Dan" Williams, whose wife was the daughter of the Beaver (Nation) chief (61-69); Alberta's Henry Mills (whose Blackfoot name was "Six-apekwan" or "Black White Man" [71]), wed a Blackfoot wife (71); their son, David, garnered an "Indian name" – Scabby Bull (71) – and won "a Blood bride, Poosa" (71). Thomson dubs him a "Black-Indian frontiersman" (72). Thomson also showcases the criminal Jesse Williams, whose wife was "a Sarcee Indian

---

5 In their Foreword to the 2015-issued, 50th Anniversary edition of Porter's classic study, Wallace Clement and Rick Helmes-Hayes teach that Porter's stratified mosaic is based on individuals and peoples possessing variously valued, "heritage" attributes, including "race, ethnicity, immigrant status, language, region, and religion" (x).

6 *Métif* and *Métis* (*Métive* and *Métisse*) are the same words, though as one Louisiana cultural website points out, the spelling difference was "due to the colonial S within and at the end of words which resembled a lower-case F, also similar to the German ß but with a longer stem..." (Louisiana...) The same Louisiana website asserts that the "French Period (1685-1764)" population numbered Africans, Indigenous peoples, plus "Quebecer [sic] fur traders (*pelletiers*, in French) and military officers, military officials from France, a handful of women (as wives for those Quebecers and French officers) from France and Québec..." (Louisiana....). One reason why charts of racial admixture circulated in the French Empire was that its fur-traders and soldiers and scarce white wives (plus "other" women pressed into serving "as wives") kept producing persons of various hues and *tribes* and *free* or *slave* status. Surely, French soldiers and traders (also slave-traders) roamed throughout North American French territory, fathering *black Métis* (the Octoroon) as well as *rouge Métis*, sometimes in Nouvelle-France, sometimes in *Nouvelle-Orléans*, sometimes in the Nord-Ouest (also a Haitian topography, not just Canadian), and sometimes even in *Nouvelle-Écosse*. In sum, *métis* is too unstable a term – racially and geographically – to be monopolized by one group of Prairie-to-B.C.-based Canadians (with Ontario permitted a nominal presence).

7 Note the collapse of fur-trade into slave-trade here.

8 Their irrefutable photos appear in the text (Mackey 200 & 201).

woman known only as 'Religious'" (73). In his history of blacks in British Columbia, Crawford Kilian reports significantly that both fur-trading companies competing for Indigenous-trapped, British Columbian furs (namely, the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company) were "color-blind, and had often employed Blacks, Indians, and *Metis* (sic) of French-Indian ancestry" (30).[9] Kilian also informs us that British Columbian Governor James Douglas (who had invited African-Americans to settle in the territory) was himself of mixed-race background, a consummate fur trader (note this fact), and then married "the half-breed daughter of the Chief Factor" (31); she was, in fact, part-Cree and part-Scot, and the couple had at least seven children (*Summary*). The Douglas children – mixed African, European, and Indigenous – were, thus, I say, "Afro-*Métis*." On November 6, 2019, Canada Post issued a stamp to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Red River Resistance (I prefer *Rebellion*), of 1869-70, a demand for recognition of *Métis* rights that led to the founding of Manitoba as the first Western province to enter Confederation ("Stamp"[10]). The stamp features a photograph of Louis Riel's *Métis*-inspired, "provisional government," whose members included Pierre Poitras, apparently black, but born to a *Canadian*[11] and a *Métis* woman; Poitras himself later wed an Indigenous bride (*Pierre Poitras* 38). He served as the Honourable Member for Baie Sainte-Paul and Prairie du Cheval Blanc in the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia and, in that capacity, seconded the motion that accepted Terms of Confederation allowing Manitoba to join the Dominion of Canada in 1870 (*Pierre Poitras* 40). Thus, one Father of Confederation may have been, in reality, "Afro-*Métis*."

Given the extensive history of Abo-Afro-Euro intermingling, not only in the fur trade, and not only in the Canadian North-West, it is impractical to maintain the noun-adjective *Métis*[12]

as precluding anyone or people of Black/African/Negro heritage, whether or not governments ever recognize "Afro-Métis" as an additional or distinct or separate *Métis* people. While there doth exists the recognized *Métis* Nation, with its particular language(s), historical territorial influence and/or administration, plus a proud history of alliance with Indigenous peoples and rejection of tyrannical, settler-government interference with their communities and culture, none of that prohibits the simultaneous existence of other Métis nations. Perhaps the saddest aspect of the current endeavor of some legislators and, well, more-or-less *white*[13] *Métis* allies, to prevent other Canadians – white and black and *Eastern* (*Québécois* and Atlantic Canadian) – from asserting their own long-repressed Indigeneity (i.e., *Métis* status), is their forgetfulness of the history of settler-government efforts to gauge, in Margaret Atwood's phrasing, "Even if all Indians are Indian, are some Indians more Indian than others?" (37).[14] The racist and sexist manipulation of the answers – plural – to that question should, in itself, give pause to state-legitimized *Métis* who credit that the same settler-regimes that have oppressed their ancestors should be permitted to administer, again, the provision of a status that was and is *decided* by (let us pray, consensual) sexual unions among the people,

9 Only the most limited or racist intelligence could imagine that none of this trio of actors ever courted and married or simply impregnated a woman or women from one of (or both of) the other fur-trade communities.

10 www.canadapost.ca/web/fr/blogs/collecting/details.page?article=2019/11/06/red_river_resistance&cattype=collecting&cat=stamps

11 Poitras's father worked as an *engagé* (*Pierre Poitras* 38), "a man employed to canoe in the fur-trade as an indentured servant" (*Engagé*). Given the frequent employ of blacks in this capacity (recall the Bonga men), this could be the origin of Poitras fils's not-camera-shy "blackness."

12 In their monograph, *A History of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia*, authors Norma Hall, Clifford P. Hall, and Erin Verrier, to describe settlers of mixed-racial heritage in Confederation-era Manitoba conclude, "As *Métis* is a name of honour for people who choose to identify with this aspect of their heritage – whether speaking French, English, or an Aboriginal language – it will serve [for us] as a universal term for past people of mixed Indigenous and non-North American heritage" (3). This interpretation does not exclude Africa(ns) from representing "non-North American heritage."

13 Leave it to Margaret Atwood to urge a controversial point that should not be controversial: "many Natives are more white, genetically, than they are Native" (37). Yes, her science is doubtful, because culture does not depend on genes, eh, but on socialization. Still, it's a tad odd that métis who look white seek to forbid the use of the term *Métis* by métis who look black. Note that Dorothy Mills-Proctor holds that "Many Red-Black people are quantitatively more Indian than Black, [but] because of their African features it is difficult for them… to claim …Indian blood" (108). Historian Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey reports that "Indigenous people who are part white or white-passing aren't dismissed as bad white actors or "settlers" [even when] involved in controversy. They retain their indigeneity regardless" (Adjetey). However, a "double standard, rooted in white privilege, reveals a particular disdain for Black-Indigenous (or *Afro-Métis*) persons who are read as illegitimate or settlers" (Adjetey, his emphasis). It seems that white supremacist racism erases the existence of an Afro-Métis cohort within the Eurocentric-derived identification of the Métis. So, some Métis who look white, in looking upon Métis who look black, see red (I pun)…

14 Witness the shameful spectacle of Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett who, in June 2019, while celebrating the signing of Federal-authorized, self-government agreements with Métis Nation branches in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, deplored "so-called Métis groups that have cropped up in Quebec and Atlantic Canada claiming Aboriginal rights to hunt and fish, suggesting that they do not qualify as *Métis*" (Forrest). She drew cheers and applause from *official Métis* when she said, "I think there are significant concerns of people handing out Métis cards to people who are not Métis" (Forrest). Bennett alleged, "research is showing that people misunderstand what the capital-M Métis are," pointing out that claiming an Indigenous ancestor is not enough to prove Métis heritage (Forrest). Thus, once more, a government – not unlike *apartheid*-era South Africa – posits that it can affix – or deny – cultural and/or racial identity. But Bennett's later sentence nixes her effort to excise the "so-called Eastern *Métis*" (Forrest): "This is why… nations will determine who their members are" (Forrest). Precisely! Nations – *plural* – will decide who is or are Métis, not government(s).

the working-class, the *oppressed* (including racialized Black Canadians). In other words, it is not governments who create "nations," but *the people* who denominate and nominate themselves, assuming the nomenclature that makes the best sense for themselves and their cultures and histories.

For proof, read Bailey, but also Ricky Atkinson, Dorothy Proctor-Mills, et al., the prophets of the Afro-*Métis* Nation: What's black and white and red "all over." Consider this essay, then, merely the theoretical preamble to the decisive conclusion about the need to "Assemble the Afro-Metis Syllabus: Some Preliminary Reading..." Coming soon to a discourse near you!

REFERENCES

Adjetey, Wendell Nii Laryea. Manufactured controversy harms relations between Black and Indigenous people. *The Toronto Star*. January 21, 2020. Electronic. Accessed on May 10, 2020.

www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/01/21/manufactured-controversy-harms-relations-between-black-and-indigenous-people.html

Atkinson, Richard, with Joe Fiorito. *The Life Crimes and Hard Times of Ricky Atkinson, Leader of the Dirty Tricks Gang: A True Story*. Toronto: Exile Editions, 2017. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.

Bailey, Troy Burle. *The Pierre Bonga Loops*. Burnaby (BC): Commodore Books, 2010. Print.

Bundale, Brett. The controversial rise of the eastern Metis: 'Where were these people all this time?' *CBC News*. May 27, 2018. Electronic. Accessed on May 17, 2010.

www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/the-controversial-rise-of-the-eastern-metis-where-were-these-people-all-this-time-1.4680105

Clement, Wallace, and Rick Helmes-Hayes. Foreword. *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*. By John Porter. 1965. 50th Anniversary Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. vii-xvi. Print.

duCille, Ann. The Unbearable Darkness of Being: 'Fresh' Thoughts on Race, Sex, and the Simpsons. *Birth of a Nation'hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O.J. Simpson Case*. Eds. Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Latour. New York: Pantheon Books, 1997. 293-338. Print.

"Engagé." Wikipedia. Electronic. Accessed on May 10, 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engag%C3%A9

Firpo, Christina. *Métis* of Vietnam: An Historical Perspective on Mixed-Race Children from the French Colonial period. *Mixed Race in Asia: Past, Present, and Future*. Eds. Zarine L. Rocha and Farida Fozdar. New York: Routledge, 2017. Print.

Forrest, Maura. Ottawa signs first self-government agreements with Metis Nation in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan. *The National Post*. June 27, 2019. Electronic. Accessed on May 10, 2020. https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/ottawa-signs-self-government-agreements-with-metis-nation-in-ontario-alberta-saskatchewan

Hall, Norma, with Clifford P. Hall, and Erin Verrier. A History of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia / Le Conseil du Gouvernement Provisioire. Winnipeg: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Manitoba Métis Federation Inc., and Government of Manitoba, [n.d.] Print.

Jones, Hilary. *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Print.

Kilian, Crawford. *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia*. Vancouver (BC): Douglas & McIntyre, 1978. Print.

Knight, Jean. Mr. Big Stuff. Stax Records. 1971. TT V-rus 1138. Musical Recording. Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas. Electronic. Accessed on May 8, 2020. www.mylhcv.com/louisiana-myths-theoctoroon/

Mackey, Frank. *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal*, 1760-1840. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010. Print.

Métis Nation. Library and Archives Canada. Electronic. Accessed on May 8, 2020. https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/metis/Pages/introduction.aspx

Mills-Proctor, Dorothy. *Born Again Indian: A Story of Self-Discovery of a Red-Black Woman and Her People*. Kola. 2010. 22 (1): 44-137. Print.

Olmsted, Frederic Law. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States: with Remarks on Their Economy*. New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856. Print.

Pierre Poitras. Compilation of Biographies: Members of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. Government of Manitoba. 38-40. Electronic. Accessed on May 9, 2020. www.gov.mb.ca/inr/majorinitiatives/pubs/laa%20biographies.pdf

Porter, John. *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965. Print.

Reuter, Edward Byron. *The Mulatto in the United States: Including a Study of the Role of Mixed-Blood Races Throughout the World*. 1918. Rpt. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969. Print.

Sicinski, Michael. *Garden Against the Machine: Ja'Tovia Gary's The Giverny Document*. Cinema Scope. 81 (April 2020): 27-29. Print.

Stamp marks 150th Anniversary of the historic Red River Resistance: Asserting Métis rights led to negotiations that made Manitoba a province. www.canadapost.ca. November 6, 2019. Electronic. Accessed on May 9, 2020.

www.canadapost.ca/cpc/en/our-company/news-and-media/corporate-news/news-release-detail.page?article=2019/11/06/red_river_resistance&cattype=announcements&cat=newsreleases

Summary. Electronic. Accessed on May 22, 220. www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDM1940381&R=1940381

Thomson, Colin A. *Blacks in Deep Snow: Black Pioneers in Canada*. Don Mills (ON): J. M. Dent & Sons, 1979. Print.

Winks, Robin W. *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 1971. 2nd Edition. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. Print.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Eugène Gumira is a visual artist of Rwandan origin. Once better known as a basketball player in the Great Lakes countries of Africa (Burundi and Rwanda), he is drawn to the use of materials in his artistic and photographic work. Gumira currently lives and works in Montreal.

Romain Jean-Jacques, aka Larost, is a visual artist born in 1989 in Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. He explores the multiplicity of individual and collective experiences. Central to his work is an openness to decentralizing history as well as its imaginary.

Fatuma Kou, whose given name is Korlu Soriba, is a tribal artist who moved to Canada in 2005 as a landed Immigrant. As a war survivor, she feels challenged each day to make a difference. She's a full-time community worker in youth employment in Ottawa and a local author with two published children's books, "I am" and "Where Mom Is from".

Komi Olaf (Nigerian, 1985) is a visual artist, poet and architectural designer who is best known for his ability to represent, both visually and poetically, the complexities of the world and generation he finds himself in. In recent years, Komi's art has been shaped by a cultural and artistic movement known as Afrofuturism, which explores African and African diasporic cultures in intersection with technology.

Yasmeen Souffrant is an emerging Canadian artist of Haitian origin. She is a graphic designer by training, but also specializes in textile design. She creates designs that are then printed to energize all types of surfaces, mainly textiles. This contemporary discipline is a mix between traditional textile art and digital art: digital textile design.

KALA & PAT'ZON

Romain Jean-Jacques aka Larost