



Orientation to Ontario

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Anti-Black racism refers to the individual and systemic oppression, prejudice and discrimination directed at Black individuals and communities. This type of racism is based on the marginalization of people of African ancestry.

While overt and obvious acts of racism are generally unacceptable in Canada today, anti-Black racism can still impact people at an individual level through **microaggressions**, or everyday hurtful comments and actions (intentional or often unintentional). A person may not realize they are being harmful with comments such as, “You speak so well. You don’t sound like a normal Black person,” or “You’re beautiful for someone so dark.” Touching a Black person’s hair without permission or clutching your bag when a Black person approaches are other common examples of anti-Black racist microaggressions.

Anti-Black racism also shows up in everyday life in more systemic ways, impacting the way institutions and society operate.

- **Employment:** Black Canadians face higher unemployment rates than the national average. Black Canadian also often earn less than non-Black people doing the same work. In addition, Black Canadians are rarely seen in leadership positions, like being the head of a company or on important boards.
- **Education:** For many Black youth, schools can be places of degradation,

harm and psychological violence. Black students often face harsher disciplinary actions in schools and are less likely to be placed in gifted programs. In many cases, Black history and contributions are underrepresented in school curricula.

- **Criminal Justice:** Black individuals are disproportionately represented in the prison system, with research showing that they are more likely to be arrested, convicted and sentenced to harsher penalties than non-Black individuals. Black people are also more likely to be victims of the police’s use of force and police shootings.
- **Profiling:** Black people are often subjected to racial profiling in public and private spaces and as well as by the police; for example, Pierre Marcel Monsanto was pulled over by police officers in a suburb of Montreal 37 times in four years.
- **Housing:** Black families can face challenges in their housing search because of discrimination by landlords or real estate agents. It is common for Black renters to face additional questions and inquiries from housing providers due to bias and stereotyping.
- **Healthcare:** Black people often get worse medical care because of biases in the healthcare system. Black patients may not be treated with the same care or respect as other patients, and

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their feelings, needs, or dignity are often ignored. There have been many cases of professional misconduct, where healthcare workers are rude or disrespectful. Doctors and other providers often fail to properly listen to or communicate with Black patients, leading to misunderstandings, mistakes, and even misdiagnoses.

HISTORY OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Anti-Black racism is rooted in colonialism, slavery and segregation and continues to affect Black communities today. During the transatlantic slave trade, millions of Africans were captured, sold and forced to work as enslaved people in the colonies throughout the Americas. These enslaved people, and any children they had, were treated as property, and their fundamental human rights were denied. The transatlantic slave trade lasted from the 16th to the 19th century.

Slavery was legal in Canada until 1834, when it was abolished by the British Empire. While slavery ended in the British colonies, Black people still faced segregation and discrimination. For example, Black Canadians were often not allowed in certain schools, restaurants and public spaces. This period is known as “segregation,” where Black Canadians were legally denied access to education, jobs and equal treatment. While segregation is no longer legal in Canada, discrimination and racism continue.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RACISM AND ANTI-BLACK RACISM?

We distinguish anti-Black racism from racism in general due to several unique factors.

Slavery and Colonization: For hundreds of years, people from Africa were enslaved and treated as property by the colonial powers of Europe. Black people were bought and sold and forced to work in terrible conditions. To justify this, even to themselves, enslavers claimed that Black people were naturally suited for hard labour and were inferior to white or European people and therefore did not deserve the same rights. To help them overlook the clear injustice of slavery, all those who benefitted from the trade (which was most people in Europe and the colonies)

had to dehumanize Black people by insisting they were uncivilized and less intelligent.

Stereotypes: Harmful ideas, such as Black people being “dangerous” or “lazy,” developed from the dehumanizing period of slavery and continue to spread through media and society. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, “scientific racism” used biased research to claim that Black people had smaller brains or were less capable of advanced thinking. Such ideas were perpetuated in the portrayal of Black people in films, books and advertisements as uneducated or violent. These negative stereotypes reinforced the idea that Black people were inferior to the rest of society. Even so-called “positive” stereotypes that Black people are good at sports and entertainment come from historical attitudes and inequalities.

Global Impact: Anti-Black racism is a global concern, affecting Black people not just in North America and Europe, but in many parts of the world. This global experience of discrimination in other countries and by other ethnocultural communities sets it apart from racism experienced by other groups.

DID YOU KNOW?

Viola Desmond (1914–1965) was a trailblazing Canadian civil rights activist and entrepreneur of Black Nova Scotian heritage. In 1946, she made history by standing up against racial segregation in a New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, cinema, refusing to vacate a whites-only section. Her courageous act became a landmark moment in the fight for equality. In 2018, she was honored as the first Canadian-born woman to be featured alone on a \$10 banknote.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Underground Railroad was a secret network that helped enslaved Black people escape from the southern United States to freedom in northern states and later Canada during the mid-19th century. Conductors such as Harriet Tubman guided escaping enslaved people through hidden routes and safe houses. Thousands of freedom seekers made the dangerous journey to Canada, where slavery was abolished in 1834.