

Living History: **Race, Diversity and Equality: Then & Now**

Developed by the Congress of Black Women of Manitoba Inc.

Context Doc.

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About Living History: Race, Diversity and Equality: Then and Now

This document is designed to bring context to the film and activities and help guide students as they analyse black history in Canada and how it relates to race, diversity and equality on a local and global scale.

RACISM:

Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior. The belief that all members of each race or ethnicity possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.

Individual Racism refers to an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours and is "a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice". (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 329).

Then: Racism is based on the belief that one race is superior to the other. The concept stems from a number of so called white scientists who want to justify that their race is superior to the other two, namely black (Negros) and Asian. To prove their point they have used some pseudo- scientific researches such as: IQ, facial characteristics, and so on.

Now: The concept of racism has not changed. What has changed is the way it is manifested in social interactions between individuals and groups of different races or backgrounds. For example, there are no different water fountains for whites and Blacks in the US or Blacks having to sit at the back of the bus. However, it is more hidden in areas such as: hiring practices, rental of housing and so on.

Provincially: It is not that much different from province to province. However, some racialized groups experience racism based on their concentration in a region.

Nationally: Racism does exist in Canada. However, there is awareness and a certain acceptance of cultural differences. Some of the government's policies such as multiculturalism, social inclusion, make racism less acceptable and less apparent.

Globally: Depending of the country, racism can be blatant in one country and less apparent in another country.

REPRESENTATION

Is a study of the crucial links amongst language, culture, and how shared meanings are constructed and represented within language (Hall, 1997).

Language is where we both produce and exchange meaning. Within a shared language are the shared understandings and cultural values of a group of people (Hall, 1997).

Language operates as a 'representational' system. Language symbolically represents shared cultural meanings. It does this through spoken sounds and the written word, but also through any other way that meaning can be represented and understood. It can be represented through music, body language, gesture, arbitrary symbols and through objects (Hall, 1977).

The description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature; how language creates meaning and how we interpret those meanings. We all swim in racist discourse and we all, all, have racist thoughts swirling in our heads. How could it be any other way in a world in which race is critically important to the meanings we make out of our world? [E.g. Hilary Clinton,

during her presidential campaign stated that she would advocate for hard working Americans (unstated: she will not work for all those lazy brown Americans)] Henry & Tator, 2010.

STEREOTYPES

"...a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people." (Cardwell, 1996). For example, a "hells angel" biker dresses in leather.

- One advantage of a stereotype is that it enables us to respond rapidly to situations because we may have had a similar experience before.
- One disadvantage is that it makes us ignore differences between individuals; therefore we think things about people that might not be true (i.e. make generalizations).

SYSTEMIC RACISM

Systemic Racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary. (Toronto Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations. Race Relations: Myths and Facts, 2019).

It manifests itself in two ways:

1. Institutional racism: racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society
2. Structural racism: inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that excludes substantial numbers of members of particular groups from significant participation in major social institutions. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 352)

Some forms of systemic racism may be more explicit or easier (for some) to identify than others: the Indian [Residential School System in Canada](#); Jim Crow Laws in the US; the exclusion of African-American golfers from elite, private golf courses in the US; the way that "universal suffrage" did not include Indigenous North American women (nor did Indigenous men receive the vote until 1960, unless they gave up their status/identity as Indigenous). Some Canadian examples of systemic racism include: the [1885 Head Tax](#), the [1923 Exclusion Act](#), the [1897 Female Refugee Act](#), passed in Ontario, which criminalized 'immoral' and 'incorrigible' acts conducted by women if they were found to be pregnant out of wedlock or drunk in public.

Fortunately, individuals can be anti-racist within, and despite, systems and institutions that are systemically racist.

EQUALITY

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the circumstances under which they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

Equality recognizes that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, gender, and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits all employers, service providers and providers of education, from discriminating against, harassing or victimizing individuals with protected characteristics. Unlawful discrimination would be things like: refusing to admit a child to a school as a pupil because of their race or discouraging a female student from undertaking a course in Engineering (Equality & Human Rights Commission, UK, 2016).

DIVERSITY

Diversity means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing.
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Diversity includes knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences.

We acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid. We respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another (Queensborough Community College, USA, 2019).

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