



**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**
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RACIAL INJUSTICE

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Living in Canada, as a West-Indian Jamaican, I'm proud of my Afro-Caribbean roots. My parents were a product of the late 1940s and 1950s "Windrush" generation. Britain had reached out to the colonies to find people to help rebuild the UK, after the Second World War. After decades of working to rebuild the country and economy, these workers were never offered full citizenship or the benefits of full citizenship. My parents decided to immigrate to Canada. We have been here for the last 50 years.

Growing up, here in Toronto's diverse community, I never thought that, as an adult, the major concern I would be dealing with would be systemic racism.

The travesty of racial justice that surrounds people of colour, particularly Black Canadians, in places of work and society, even today, is simply unacceptable. There is much work to be done to improve conditions in our own workplace and communities.

After working for the TTC for 30 years, in my opinion, we still haven't found meaningful ways to mitigate racism on the job.

I feel it is important, as Black workers, to share our experiences, if we do experience racial injustice in the workplace. Black workers cannot fully participate in the workplace because of the barriers of racial bias.

Recently, in an anti-racism training session, I noted that there are many long-tenured TTC employees who are perplexed to hear about visible minorities and the need for anti-racism discussions. When I questioned if these types of seminars will make a difference – the answer was, "Probably not. But we must work to open minds and to provoke people to see and think about the racial injustice around us."

What do we, people of the Black Community, want?

We want creative, progressive and sustainable changes that mean something in society. We must find ways to build bridges, rather than divide us.

We need tools to help mitigate bias in the workplace – identify it, address it and root it out.

We must keep anti-racism messaging alive, consistent and constant. Not just talk about it for a day or a month.

We need to assertively safeguard democratic ideologies and human rights for all. Our present-day challenges include the polarizing opinions that seep through our borders – and affect the way we see things in our country.

In 2019, while attending a Shop Steward Training Seminar in Washington, DC, I visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture with my fellow union brothers. It was a visceral experience – so moving that I chose to walk through the exhibits with another brother, in silence, so I could take it all in. The lower floors told the story of slaves transported on ships. The horrific slave history that followed for generations. From there, we walked the top floor showing milestones accomplished in recent times – Oprah. Sports personas. Obama. It seemed like their narrative was intended to demonstrate that 'we have overcome.' This just did not seem right – and is far from the truth.

It is important that we don't forget the journey of our Black sisters and brothers – from slavery and bondage toward racial equality. But we must take a deep breath and recognize that we are, simply – not there yet.

