



**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**
FEBRUARY 2021



RACE AND GENDER

NATASHALE COINTE (Operator)

I am a proud African-Canadian of Afro-Caribbean heritage. My maternal grandparents come from St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad, my mother is from England and my father from Dominica.

I believe there is Black history being created every day. I am inspired by the power of Black women.

My mother is my greatest inspiration. As a child, my mother didn't really understand racism compared to what she knows now. But one particular experience during her teenage years clearly shaped her life. While in high school, she was keen to study law. However, her guidance counsellor discouraged her because they thought "she did not have the ability" or the "know how" to endure such extensive schooling and experience. My mother said the counsellor didn't do this to other students who were not of colour, encouraging them to pursue whatever they wished.

My mother, because of her experiences, did everything she could to provide me with the best life possible and the opportunities to achieve the things I wanted to. Her experiences have motivated me to pursue higher education and to continue to pursue educational opportunities when they became available. Her experiences taught me to give my best effort to achieve the things I want, to never give up and to not shy away from things because of what people may think or say about us.

In the past, we had Rosa Parks who refused to be seated at the back of the bus. Today, we have Kamala Harris elected as the first female Vice President and the first African-American Vice President of the United States. As a Black woman, I am proud to be part of this great and unforgettable moment in history. My mother, who immigrated from Europe, never thought she would see the day when an African American woman would hold one of the highest offices in the world.

As an African-Canadian woman, I can see the signs of change – the power shift and breaking of barriers in our society. I am excited for all little African-Canadian girls and girls from around the world. They will not only know that they can be whatever they want to be, but can now SEE that it is possible to be whatever they want to be.

Moving forward into the future, it is my hope and dream that the entire world will continue to see us in a game-changing, ground-breaking image of creating a 'new Black History.' With the continued efforts of our community, we will send shock waves throughout the world and smash barriers people never imagined we would. We continue to strive, to rise up and to create new history. Better history. The best history.

I see my role in creating new history as being a voice, to speak out whenever I can. To act and be part of various initiatives, even such as this one, so I can use every opportunity to demonstrate to others who may be watching that people care about changing views and making a difference.

In our workplace, while some efforts are being made, I believe the employer needs to do more to be a part of the current shift and to have a bigger voice in the things that affect a large number of their employees of colour and indigenous employees. These efforts must continue all year round.

Our Union is the voice of our workers, not just on issues pertaining to job security, but our voice for all matters and we look to it to provide a strong and unified voice to create awareness among our members and in our communities, and provide us resources and tools to unite us in this cause.

We all have an opportunity to lead the way towards creating a new history.

