



A Look Forward Towards our Black History

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Sandra Bland age 28, Andrew Loku age 45, Tamir Rice age 12, Jermaine Anthony Carby age 33 and Freddie Gray age 25. These are but a few of the African Canadian and African American workers and children that will forever be burned into the African Canadian History books for 2015. Seared into the psyche of a generation who will continue to hope and pray that these types of lethal police interactions never find its way to our children, our grandchildren, our families or us for that matter.

Black Lives Matter we cry. All lives matter others cry. If we were not careful this may very well be the great 2016 African Canadian debate that this generation discusses with the next generation when they ask us why in 2036 they are still struggling with some of the same injustices that we struggled with in 2016. This is not the type of conversation that I want to have with my grandchildren. Struggling towards the end goal of the same opportunities being available to all willing to work for it is not an option for African Canadians. It is an obligation that we have to the next generation.

2015 and the beginning of 2016 will forever be known to many as the year that we compared the lead poisoning of the residences of Flint Michigan with the bottle water advisories on many of our First Nations reserves. Asking ourselves the question, why in this modern era can a person or persons poison an entire city or an entire First Nations reserve and no one go to jail?

Looking back in recent Black History, we have made some advancement with the inauguration of Toronto's 1st black police Chief Mark Saunders. While many of us disagree with the new Chief's position on carding (which has NOT gone away) many see the inauguration of Chief Saunders with new hope. Hope that our children, the next generation may also shatter what many of us see as a societal glass ceiling giving our children some of the same opportunities that others have had for generations.

Continuing to look back, we see 2015 as the year that as a nation we achieved a public enquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls across Canada. Some reading this will ask the question, why in a Black History month article we are talking about Aboriginal women and girls? Answer-because these are among the list of things that matter. Dr. Martin Luther King said it best when he said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." If I may be so bold to take Dr. King's quote a little further, as workers and as African Canadians our lives begin to end the day we allow elected officials to put divisions among us. Divisions between those that wear a hijab and those that do not, those that have status in Canada and those that may not, those that have Canadian citizenship and those who come as refugees or migrant workers.

2016 must be recorded in black history as the year where we as a people capitalized on the collective roles that African Canadians play in shaping Canadian society. Whether we are exercising our collective voting power by electing or sending packing our elected officials, or whether we are supporting a group of young women bold enough to block Toronto's Alan Expressway on our behalf in order to let the world know that our lives matter also. To quote the journalist Desmond Cole, "No social movement is won by catering to popular opinion." The edifice of our collective black history is not and will never be an exception that rule.

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