



# ANTI-RACISM IN EDUCATION

*Missing  
in  
Action.*



The Canadian Centre  
for Policy Alternatives

Edited by Charles C. Smith

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## Introduction

It was about a year ago when I was asked to edit this edition of *Our Schools / Our Selves*. Executive Editor Erika Shaker and I had talked on the phone and by email about it, and then she came to Toronto to join a conversation at my place with Tim McCaskell, Erica Lawson and Tina Lopes. Some others had sent regrets for not being able to join this initial conversation.

As you might imagine, the conversation was spirited, filled with memory of what was when anti-racism had emerged as a vibrant social, political and institutional force. We also discussed our aspirations for what otherwise might be in the world around us today and wondered aloud about what had become of ‘anti-racism’ in public discourse, policy and practice. There was a strong sense amongst us that anti-racism had been purposefully exiled, rudely and quite abusively brutalized in the heated pace of economic globalization and its political support. The word, and its practice, seemed to have disappeared, swallowed up and made benign under the guise of diversity, social cohesion and/or inclusion.

Despite this, at the same time we were ever more aware of the need to boldly discuss racism and to point to the ever-available evidence of its existence whether in terms of the distribution of



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wealth, assets, decision-making, education, encounters with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Particularly, we were concerned about the generation we were and the one that's behind us, our children and the children of our friends. What kinds of messages were they receiving in their lives? What normative values were educational institutions creating for them? Where did racism fit? What impact was it having? Was it being challenged and, if so, how and by whom?

While exploring these questions, we turned our minds to a more practical challenge: if the CCPA put out a book on anti-racism in education, who would be the contributing authors? Would it be those who had been around for some time and were both pioneers of the movement in education, or, would such a publication attract newer voices and raise perspectives from across Canada? Clearly, we had few answers to any of these questions and we collectively drew a blank when it came to whom the contributors to this edition might be—aside from those we knew and knew well. We seemed to be heading into an unknown, let alone contested, terrain.

As a result, I decided to issue a call for abstracts to see who might be interested and to see if this book would attract those who have been working in the field for some time as well as new voices. In perusing the table of contents, it is evident that this was successful as this publication brings together some of the founders of the movement of anti-racism in education (i.e. George Sefa Dei, Tim McCaskell, Carol Tator and Frances Henry) and many new voices, some of whom are publishing for the first time. How exciting!

What is most exciting is the evident growth in the scope of anti-racism both as a theoretical construct and as praxis and, further, that this has taken place during a time in which anti-racism has been under consistent and virulent disregard and attack. While there are many references to stalwart theoreticians and practitioners throughout many of the articles in this collection, at the same time there are new approaches, theoretical underpinnings and classroom models that are discussed. Whether examining notions of Indigeneity, intersectionality, the use of humour, Afrocentricity and spirituality; or writing about primary schools, high schools, universities, legal education and the relationship of education to norms and conducts in the workplace; or, as well,

looking at inter-systemic modes of racialized oppression (e.g., the relationship between schools, children's aid societies and law enforcement authorities), *Anti-Racism in Education: Missing in Action* spreads out a wide yet focused net on the challenges faced by Aboriginal and racialized peoples in our classrooms; it also offers theoretical and practical approaches to addressing these challenges through educational policy and programs, and the relationship of educational institutions to other public and private sector bodies as well as to broader societal values.

It all starts with the title of this publication and its cover, then makes its way through this introduction to the various sections and the articles within them. To begin, Tim McCaskell draws attention to the title of this publication, particularly its militaristic term "Missing in Action". I have to admit, my choice of this title was very instinctive—it just occurred to me that this is where things were at with anti-racism as I've discussed above and, as such, it was important for me to name it as such. The basis for my notion on this was based on personal experience in the sectors I'm active in—as educator, change agent, consultant, artist/poet, facilitator and cultural activist. I tend to think I have a rather expansive view of things and, with a system of networks that feed me, I felt confident that the title was appropriate and that ant-racism was under a rather virulent attack and, as a result, had become a considerably small part of public parlance.

Based on this notion, I asked Meera Sethi, who created a brilliant cover for my book on racial profiling, to take up creating a cover for this edition. What Meera has conjured suites the theme of this work very well. She has chosen symbols of white supremacy evident in Canada, i.e., the Mounties, the tools of war, a toy soldier, the white hero on horseback, the train whose railways were built through the exploitation of Asian labour—all of these images intertwined and placed on the surface of a brick building (school house) as if they were graffiti.

As for the authors, it took awhile to consider how to group the articles; however, their abstracts helped me cut through the fog of what this edition might look like and now has emerged in the form of seven sections. These are:

- Where are we now?
- Challenges to student learning

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- Curriculum and educators: challenges and models for change
- Approaches to Indigeneity and Aboriginal peoples
- Black-focused education: politics, pedagogy and community
- Colleges and universities: the new terrain
- Spirituality and continuity.

I will summarize the content of these sections below. Before that, however, I shall stake out some territory to provide a focus for the book overall. In taking this route, I wish to acknowledge my debt to Carol Tator and Frances Henry for offering their thoughts on racialization. They state that:

Racialization refers to the broad social processes, including colonialism and cultural privileging, through which racialized “others” are constructed, differentiated, stigmatized, and excluded. To say that society is racialized suggests that it is systemically arranged around beliefs about race; and that the distribution of power, resources, images and ideas closely corresponds with membership of racialized groups. Furthermore, it moves scholarship away from the discredited biological construct of race to the sociologically more powerful notion of a racialized ideology or ideological process.

It is important to emphasize that the processes of racialization in (educational institutions) ... and elsewhere do not operate in isolation from other forms of oppression. Although racism is the primary focus of our analysis of racial inequity within the academy, it is important to stress that the processes of racialization intersect with other forms of oppression. The matrix of domination operates along a series of socially constructed axes that include race, gender, class, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, and different abilities. This interlocking framework is important in understanding how power and powerlessness operates in the structures of (educational institutions, including) the academy. While there are many instances where these oppressions overlap and interlock with one another, the saliency of race and racism in education remains at the centre of our analysis.<sup>1</sup>

This is the pivotal notion of this collection of articles. Throughout this book, each author chronicles what s/he sees, has researched and has experimented with in classrooms to promote

anti-racism in educational institutions. At the same time, many contributors also see and discuss the relationship between racism in education and other institutions, and the intricate yet devastating link between them. As a result, *Anti-Racism in Education: Missing in Action* provides not only a look at educational institutions but, even more so, the impact of racialized discrimination and disadvantage that work in tandem to continue the legacy of racialized oppression in Canadian society.

To give evidence to this assertion, let us turn to the sections of the book.

### **Where are we now?**

In offering the first comments in this book, it seemed important to me to start out with a somewhat reflective gaze, one that provides an eye on the past while engaging in the present in order to point toward the future. Tim McCaskell's article begins this work by suggesting that anti-racist education was an attempt at challenging dominant ideas in regards to race as part of the struggle to change the dominant material relationships that excluded racialized peoples. The claims made by those pushing for anti-racist education were made against the redistributive organs of the State, specifically the public education system, the stated goal of which was to provide equal educational access to all children in the context of a progressive tax regime.

McCaskell further notes that the push for anti-racism in the 1980s was met by a huge push-back by elite circles in the 1990s and in the new century. The implementation of neoliberal social and economic policy nationally and internationally reasserted a traditional balance of power. The promise of the post-colonial states was crushed by trade policies which established a neo-colonial new world order and reestablished the traditional transfer of resources, material and human, from the South to the North. In Canada, while some immigrant communities have achieved assimilation, the situation for new immigrants is statistically worse than in the 1980s. Finally, neoliberal policies have put the public education system itself under attack, resulting in middle class flight to private schooling, and public educational policies geared to meet labour market demands rather than social inclusion. In this regard, the fading of anti-racist education reflects the erosion of power of the social forces that once

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promoted it, both in terms of their ability to promote policy and to insist on local implementation of them.

Carol Schick offers a glimpse of the theoretical landscape of potentially transformative education that is variously called anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural, critical race theory, queer theory, integrative feminism, culturally responsive teaching and doubtless other examples in this field that gesture toward social change through education. She suggests that this terminology has a wide range of applications and meanings and is often used in overlapping and sometimes contradictory ways. Rather than parse the meanings of each of the terms as they are often used interchangeably and without focus, Schick looks at the transformative and emancipatory potential anti-racism offers, often the most challenging to accomplish in public education and teacher education programs, and so are, regrettably, most often missing in action in the midst of many other activities carried out under its name.

Shantelle Moreno explores multicultural education in British Columbia since its inception in 1971, noting that the policy of multiculturalism has been enacted within Canada's educational framework to create a culturally, racially and linguistically welcoming school atmosphere, and is rooted at the crux of inclusivity policies in schools. Moreno questions the functions of multicultural education and her article poses several critical questions, including: Has liberal multiculturalism led to the acceptance of European ethnocentrism in educational curricula? Are the diverse experiences of all Canadian students being engaged in the classroom and supported in curricula? Does the Canadian policy of multicultural education promote a hierarchy of race?

In "Rethinking Anti-Racism and Equity Education in Public Schools", Rosina Agyepong identifies that there have been attempts made by some educators to ensure that equity prevails in some schools; however, she also notes that others ignore the importance of anti-racism policy in the development of curriculum and of teachers and school administrators as they underestimate its potential to impact the quality of education in Ontario. She suggests that, for anti-racist and equity education to be delivered effectively, educators need to work collectively to bring about change in schools. Her article examines anti-racism and equity education in Ontario schools in terms of policy, curricu-

lum and the development of teachers and school administrators; how equitable resources can be allocated to the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and racialized peoples; and the future implications for pedagogy and directions for future research.

Sandra Fonseca follows these articles with a review of zero tolerance policies in schools and their racialization. She begins her piece noting that students need a safe and secure school environment to focus on learning and that research in school safety and discipline over the last decades have influenced school legislation, replacing harsh formulaic approaches in favor of ethical humanizing approaches that offer new alternatives. Citing Ontario as an educational jurisdiction that has changed from a punitive zero tolerance approach to a progressive discipline approach, Fonseca explores discourses in the realm of school discipline in the broader North American context and specifically, the circumstances that paved the way for new initiatives in school discipline in Ontario. Drawing on varied sources, including investigative news reports and personal experiences as an educator and parent, she takes a close look at the impact of legislation on racialized students and identifies school disciplinary practices that can alienate and marginalize them. Fonseca concludes with some suggestions for a truly transformative shift from policy to practice so schools can truly be spaces where students receive an equitable education and prepare to participate as future citizens in a democratic society.

To wrap up this first section and setting the stage for the rest of the book, the conversation between George Sefa Dei and Marlon Simmons, “Educating About Anti-Racism: The Perils And Desires”, takes a very serious look at such questions as: What is anti-racism? What is its discursive lens? Challenges of the work? Risks and consequences of such work? How do these address contemporary discussions about post-race? What does it mean to ‘decolonize’ anti-racism? And what is an anti-racist racist? Somewhat similar to McCaskell’s piece, Dei and Simmons use this opportunity to discuss the challenges that have emerged from past practices of anti-racism and the critical need to forecast anti-racism work while learning from past experiences, engaging in the contested terrain of the day and moving forward with a broader and more inclusive focus on anti-racism

in terms of its connections to other forms of oppression, e.g., sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism and so on.

### **Challenges to student learning**

In building on the above, the contributors to the second section of this book take a close look at what is happening in the education system to the learning opportunities for Aboriginal and racialized students and the roles/responsibilities of teachers to support this learning. Carl James and Leanne Taylor's contribution gives voice to students who are often described as 'at risk'. They explore these students' schooling, educational, social and community experiences as well as their interactions and relationships with teachers, administrators, police and parents. Based on data from a study conducted with a range of youth who had had brushes with the law, the majority of the students were Black and all had at some point been either expelled, suspended or were regularly disciplined in schools. By sharing their stories, James and Taylor give voice to these students and to others like them, and discuss issues and questions that must be examined and addressed if teachers and administrators are to effectively work with racialized students and their parents.

Sarah Margles and Rabbi Miriam Margles argue that racism is most insidiously propagated not by overt acts of discrimination, but rather by the ubiquitous, subtle, and usually unintentional and unconscious exchanges that occur in daily conversation and ordinary experiences. They further suggest that, while racism in its institutional and interpersonal manifestations receives a great deal of attention and thought, the form of racism that support and perpetuates these, yet often goes unnoticed, is internalized racism. As a result, they examine the dynamics of internalized oppression, the characteristics that mark its appearance in students, and their varied manifestations. Their work is offered as a resource for teachers and administrators to help them see internalized racism, name it as such, and contradict the corrosive messages that the students have internalized. This approach will enable educators to effectively give a hand to the students who are struggling, and to build learning communities that are supportive and mindful.

As a teacher who grew up in rural Ontario, attended a small university and went directly back into the classroom in her

hometown, Rachael Nicholls did not consider herself a racist person, and did not see how her practice was serving to (re)produce hierarchies by not recognizing power differences of race, class and gender. However, in “Through the Looking Glass: The Need for Educators to Be Reflexive Inquirers”, Nicholls asserts that it is important to be aware of one’s perspectives as a teacher in order to be prepared to change our mental constructs around knowledge, beliefs and societal structures. In this context, her article explores the idea that theory, and research based on theory, have direct relevance to pedagogical problems within the classroom; that in “passing through the looking glass” we may question our assumptions and our social identity in order to inform our practice and become reflexive inquirers. Nicholls acknowledges that teachers are makers of culture and that social divisions are not divine determination or fate but, rather, the economic, political and ideological contexts which society continues to sustain and reproduce. She argues that educators who have dared to study and learn new ways of thinking and teaching so that their work does not reinforce domination on the basis of race, religion, gender, class, nationality, ability, language, sexual orientation and sexual identity, have created a pedagogy of hope by contributing to the creation of a more just society and compassionate world.

Samantha Peters and Thijiba Sinnathamby employ an anti-racist feminist lens in their contribution to this volume. In this regard, they seek to examine the politics of the classroom—namely, the silencing of racialized and marginalized bodies as well as the unchallenged/unquestioned pervasiveness of whiteness—and how it has contributed to institutionalized racism that exists in the Canadian educational system. For the purpose of this analysis, they provide anecdotes of their former experiences in the classroom and theorize it with contemporary understandings of racialization, particularly to examine the contentions between student-student, student-teacher and student-subject relationships and how through these complexities, theory and practice have been separated in the classroom. As a result, they make several suggestions on what needs to be done to create a more inclusive curriculum.



## Curriculum and educators: challenges and models for change

This section of the book starts to unpack some of the anti-racism challenges in teacher education and working with teachers to employ anti-racism strategies in the classroom. Laura Mae Lindo's paper begins by investigating the role of teachers in schools, taking seriously the common concern that their teaching environments are not equipped with the necessary resources to teach in ways that support the aims of antiracist scholars and theorists. Lindo is concerned about the foundation for exploring how educators might negotiate the very real obstacles they face within the contexts of their classrooms and schools. As such, she considers some practical ways to uphold antiracist practices in the classroom while waiting for "proper" resources to arrive. What can be done if our texts show a preponderance of white faces? What do we do if we are told that there is no money available in the budget to buy more racially equitable texts? Is there a way of using what we have available to design socially just and equitable projects and achieve curriculum goals even when racial diversity is not present in the materials available in our schools? To address these concerns, Lindo details the aims and results of a study she initiated with teacher candidates preparing to enter into Canadian secondary school system. Using comedy as a springboard for discussions about race and racism, this study models antiracist pedagogical practices while also guiding our future teachers through their own personal reflections on examples of racist behaviours and structures in Canadian society that they come across in their everyday lives.

Anita Jack-Davies writes that the opening of Canada's first Africentric school in Toronto generated heated debate concerning whether such a school is needed in Canadian society. As diverse voices weighed in on the topic in private conversations and through the print and news media, teacher education programs in Ontario continue to attempt to 'prepare' teachers for increasingly diverse schools. In 2007, Jack-Davies taught a course on social justice to 37 teacher candidates (TCs) enrolled in a one-year, consecutive teacher education program. Jack-Davies discusses some of the challenges she faced when she used a critical perspective with an antiracist focus and outlines some of the pedagogical strategies employed and student reactions to

the course material. She cites research that shows that the average TC is White, middle class, and suburban, is monolingual, heterosexual, and has little knowledge and/or experiences with racialized 'Others'. This incongruence between the diversity of the student population with the homogeneity of the teaching population is cause for concern, particularly since TCs perceive the term 'anti-racism' itself to have negative connotations. For many of the TCs she taught, the course on social justice was the first time that they had encountered an antiracist perspective, where they were asked to openly speak about issues of race, of marginalization, privilege, and their own White identities, which at times proved upsetting. Jack-Davies critically reflects upon some of the triumphs and challenges she faced, given her own racial and gendered identities, and concludes with a discussion of the impact that her teaching of this course had for her own teaching and her own conceptions of what it means to teach using a critical perspective.

Jeff Kugler and Nicole West-Burns from the Centre for Urban Schooling (CUS), OISE, University of Toronto have developed a framework on "Culturally Responsive" and "Relevant Pedagogy" within the Canadian urban context. The framework is based upon the literature and theoretical tenets of bodies of work in the U.S. known as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Among the many ways this work gets implemented, at the core it connects pedagogical practice to high expectations regardless of issues of social identity; it infuses issues of culture and cultural components within the classroom teaching and environment; and engages students in developing questioning of the status quo and critical consciousness.

This pedagogical approach has not been specifically described or researched within the Canadian context and, although the literature provides many notions of "what it is", it does not always connect that to what those practices look like in terms of what schools and individual teachers do and neglect to do on a very practical level. In an effort to support the professional development that CUS is providing to some schools within the Model Schools for Inner Cities within the Toronto District School Board, the CUS office, attempted to put "the meat on the bones" of what this work could look like and represent in classrooms and schools. This article outlines such an approach.

“A Class Divided—On The Road To a School United” is collaboratively written by staff of the George Syme Community School and the OISE Centre for Urban Schooling. In working with teachers in some urban schools, the authors involved in this collaborative piece incorporated a focus on “Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy” which is discussed in the previous article. In September 2008, a team of teachers from George Syme public school started the process of examining their teaching practice in order to make a difference for students. This approach did not blame students for any academic or other shortcomings but, rather, looked at what could be altered in terms of educators’ practice in ways that would support student engagement and student agency. The teachers decided to begin their unit by engaging the students in an activity that focused on understanding differences and discrimination. The activity was called, “A Class Divided” and it walked students through an experience of discrimination based on privilege, adapting elementary school teacher Jane Elliot’s model created from the late 1960s, in a Midwestern U.S. town with an all-white population. The approach used enabled students to see the impact of discrimination and supported their learning to identify and confront inequality and injustice.

### **Approaches to Indigeneity and Aboriginal peoples**

While on one hand our educational institutions continue to struggle with how best to educate Aboriginal peoples, we are faced with the challenges of recent immigrants or those who have been in Canada for some time and who have access to Indigenous systems of knowledge based on their personal and/or their ancestors country of origin. In exploring Indigenous systems of knowledge and their potential application to anti-racist education, Rose Ann Torres discusses the role and the nature of Indigenous knowledge and studies in promoting anti-racist education in schools. In so doing, she uses an anti-colonial discursive framework to explore anti-racism education and the question of why this is needed in schools. Torres also includes strategies on how to promote anti-racism education by using Indigenous knowledge and, in doing so, responds to the question of what makes these strategies Indigenous in order to make a distinction between the pursuit of critical education/pedagogy and indigenous/anti-colonial educa-

tion. Further, she discusses the question of how to implement these ideas in the school system since the role of Indigenous knowledge in promoting anti-racism in education is significant based on the existence of racism in our community.

Regarding Aboriginal peoples education in Canada, Rick Hesch argues that in an earlier period, as the U.S. civil rights movement, militant Quebec nationalism, and global anti-colonial movements, including the force of Indigenous struggles for self-determination, were being institutionalized, the Canadian government accepted a policy advocated by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972, "Indian Control of Indian Education." The policy's nominal acceptance did result in significant differences at the band level and never went beyond modernization to authentic autonomy. Hesch strongly asserts that Aboriginal peoples have survived over a quarter century of neoliberal reign and that opportunities for meaningful Aboriginal autonomy in education are largely more distant than ever. Hesch further asserts that the exclusion of Aboriginal parents, communities, and students from democratic influence of their formal schooling counts as a case of institutionalized and systemic racism and his article critically reviews several policy initiatives that contribute to this. He concludes by reviewing progressive alternatives such as an early childhood education training program for Meadow Lake Tribal Council, the Right to the City Alliance, and the work of Real Renewal in Regina.

Addressing the role of non-Aboriginal teachers in teaching about Aboriginal issues, Cara Zurzulo suggests that, despite efforts to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into curricula and classroom practices, sources indicate that Canadian students—both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal alike—still graduate high school with less than adequate levels of information about Aboriginal people in Canada. She further suggests that the success or failure of efforts to integrate Aboriginal perspectives has come to rest largely upon individual classroom teachers and, as such, it is imperative to include their perspectives in research on this important policy initiative. In this article, Zurzulo explores these matters with five non-Aboriginal teachers who were interviewed about their experiences. Based on this, her research questions the origins of reforms and the potential benefits and barriers that mandated change presents. One important finding

of this research is that teachers, in this case, were making curriculum contributions that were often made invisible by formal policy making processes.

Alyssa Stryker is concerned about the paucity of educational materials in Canadian high schools that address the history of Aboriginal peoples. In exploring this, Stryker examines three standard high school texts and analyzes their treatment of one of the most significant flashpoints between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, i.e., the Oka crisis of 1990. Stryker argues that the importance of this event is grossly understated in three textbooks she examines and that the treatment of this incident does nothing to address the colonial past and ongoing oppression of Aboriginal peoples by European settlers and Canadian governments today. Through a turn to anti-racist curricula, Stryker suggests it is possible to re-envision the institutionalized education system as a place of decolonization rather than as a site in which colonial power and knowledge formation/frameworks are simply re-inscribed.

### **Black-focused education: politics, pedagogy and community**

Over the past two years there has been much debate about the proposal in Toronto to establish an Africentric school. Despite the overwhelming and publicly acknowledged evidence of the withdrawal rate of African Canadian youth from schools and their increasing negative interactions with law enforcement authorities, the notion of establishing such a school had been called everything from poor pedagogy to unrealistic preparation for the real world as well as an undesirable vestige of segregation. In “The Role of the School Curriculum to Obliterate Anti-Black Racism”, Oscar Brathwaite examines the role of educators, teachers and community leaders whom he thinks must ask and answer several questions related to the educational outcomes of students of African descent. Some of these questions are: What paradigm shifts are required now to bring about meaningful changes to improve the success rate of African Canadian students in the public educational system? What role does the school curriculum play in motivating and inspiring young learners to either learn to their full potential, or force them to become disengaged at an early age from the learning process, and eventually from the society?

Brathwaite aims to solicit an in-depth dialogue, analysis and critique of the problem and argues that the effective use of the curriculum in the education process could be one of the critical strategies in liberating the teaching and learning process from rigid Eurocentric dogma. He further argues that the effective use of the curriculum in the education process could be another critical strategy in liberating Africans globally from constraining Eurocentric depictions of whom and what they are. The paper further postulates that it is imperative at this time for Africans scholars and educators to collaborate in finding solutions that would address the major problems that African Canadian students are encountering in the public school system.

In somewhat of a critical furthering of Brathwaite's article, Dr. Andrew M.A. Allen uses the September 2009, Toronto District School Board launch of its innovative Africentric Alternative School as a site of controversy requiring critical analysis. The school opened after much debate and to the point where it was even deemed "controversial" and "segregationist" by mainstream media and politicians because of its focus on African-Canadian students. This was despite the large body of research for decades that has identified the problem of the disproportionate number of African-Canadian students disengaging from learning, under-achieving and eventually dropping out of school. Today, much of the debate still centres simply on the rationale for or against establishing the school and not on the curricular shift that needs to take place within an entire school system that still continues to fail to meet the needs of all its students. Allen acknowledges that the Africentric school proposes to offer alternative pedagogic, and communicative tools, resources and instructional approaches to reflect the lived experiences of and respond to the needs and interest of its students. However, he suggests that the Africentric school and curriculum has been conceived of and developed within traditional notions of schooling and curriculum since the current model of the Africentric school may still employ the same values, cultural assumptions and practices as the mainstream school system. In this regard, Allen explores how can these Africentric curricular goals be realized within the context of the current Eurocentric school system? Allen questions how these Africentric curricular goals can be realized within the context of the current Eurocentric school system; and what kinds of struc-

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tural, cultural and systemic changes must take place to realize these goals?

Jill Provoe's paper provides information about the African Canadian Transition Program (ACTP) at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and why this approach was established to better support the educational needs of Black learners. Provoe explores the program's guiding values framework, the *Nguzo Saba*, and how Africentric and anti-racist ideologies have been incorporated into the curriculum, pedagogy and overall design of this culturally-empowering educational experience, as Canada's only Africentric high school diploma program for adults. The ACTP recently successfully concluded its three year pilot phase to become one of the Nova Scotia Community College's continuing programs under the School of Access. Over 40 Black students have completed the African Canadian Transition Program, and many have gone on to complete their Diploma requirements or to access post-secondary educational opportunities. Student testimonials from the three-year pilot program evaluation will be incorporated to serve as a testament to the impact of the program and to highlight the positive effects Africentric education has on the lives of those fortunate to experience its influence. The program strives to create appreciative and inclusive learning and working spaces for all learners, while incorporating the historical and contemporary needs and challenges facing African Canadians. Honest dialogue about institutional racism, although not always comfortable, is used to set a strong position to lead the way across the country in creating an equitable organization and building trust within the strong and vibrant indigenous African Nova Scotian communities.

Lisa K. Taylor and Kirsten Boutilier's qualitative action-research study, in one course in a highly ethn racially and linguistically diverse urban high school in Toronto, explores a teacher-designed Africentric grade 11 English course (Black Canadian Literature) aimed at developing diverse students' multiple literacies (different dialects, genres, media and modalities of oral, written and visual texts, including Patois and hip hop literacies), critical language awareness and critical skills of civic participation through a culturally affirming and inclusive curriculum of African diasporic literary, popular and commercial expressive forms. This teacher-researcher collaborative study

pursued several research questions such as: What cultural and linguistic capital and what (multi)literacy and identificatory practices do students bring into the classroom? What forms of critical language awareness and critical analysis vis-à-vis issues of cultural and political representation, and what capacities for critical language use and civic agency are evidenced in student learning when the language arts curriculum explicitly reflects and explores racialized youth's ethnolinguistic heritage and capital? Through this exploration, it is clear that a valuable model of inner-school education is being implemented.

### **Colleges and universities: the new terrain**

In the past, most, if not all, of the focus on anti-racism in education had been directed at primary and secondary schools. It was as if universities by their very nature were not only not considered but were not to be considered in the same ambit. However, Carol Tator and Frances Henry argue that for at least the last two decades racialized and Indigenous faculty, along with anti-racism colleagues, have critically interrogated the ways in which the culture of Whiteness and racism impacts upon their lives inside the academy and in the wider society. Drawing from their new edited book *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity*, Tator and Henry, along with their co-contributors, have documented the ways in which mutating forms of racism function in the academy. These manifestations include: cultural racism, everyday racism, institutional and systemic racism, democratic, discursive and epistemological racism. In this article, the authors identify how the processes of racialization are reflected across academic spaces including: the under-representation of both faculty and students of colour; the continuing dominance of Anglo- Eurocentric curricula; the relative absence of critical pedagogy in the classroom; the failure of affirmative action, diversity, and anti-racism policies to address the significant structural barriers to inclusion and equity; the undervaluing of research topics, models and approaches utilized by academics of colour; the racialization of professors of colour and Indigenous faculty by students, colleagues, and administrations, and the failure to bring about more equitable hiring, promotion and tenure practices. Based on this, Tator and Henry argue that the core problem appears to lie with the dom-



inant hegemonic institutional culture of the academy and that the notion and strength of liberalism as a defining ideology in the Canadian university is challenged by those who continue to be stigmatized, marginalized and excluded.

Also exposing challenges in universities, Andrew Crosby suggests that, although international centres in universities offer services for international students, the understanding and action concerning deeper issues of discrimination is inadequate, and that an anti-racism agenda must be pushed alongside the powerful pushing and pulling of market forces that drive the focus on international student recruitment, student mobility, and international partnerships between institutions that reflect this. In stating this, Crosby acknowledges that scholars and activists are doing admirable work shedding light on the existence and perpetuation of racism in Canada and in the education system, yet there has been less work done towards linking racism within International Education. This lack of attention, analysis, and action serves to marginalize international students along with their experiences in, and contributions to, Canada. As such, Crosby examines the macro and micro levels of anti-racism education, the former dealing with provincial education policies while also looking at federal immigration policy, and the latter looking at what scholars and activists are doing at the campus level, as well as the institutional response to racism.

Papers by Charles C. Smith and Tina Lopes are, respectively, based on presentations made to a group of legal educators and to curriculum developers in community colleges across Ontario. Smith's paper chastises the legal profession for its overwhelmingly White composition and points to the challenges faced by Aboriginal and racialized peoples in considering applying to law schools. At the same time, Smith chronicles the ongoing history of racism within law school and the legal profession and posits that Canadian law schools lag well behind their counterparts in the U.S. who have been increasing enrollment of Aboriginal and racialized peoples over the past decades. This paper ends with the recognition of the importance of legal education and that graduates of law schools are materially involved in setting laws and policies and are standard-bearers of Canadian social values and that this is a travesty since law schools and the legal profession do not have a critical mass of Aboriginal and racialized peoples in their ranks.

Tina Lopes' article puts forward the argument that education in community colleges purports to enable their graduates to meet the challenges of the 'real world'. However, from her vantage point as an educator and organizational change expert, she identifies the incongruity between such a lofty aspiration and how it fails to address issues of racism and other forms of discrimination in the workplace and, by this, somewhat silencing community college graduates who enter the workplace. Lopes challenges her audience to see the evidence of racism and other forms of discrimination in society and to enable students to identify and challenge them.

### **Spirituality and continuity**

A rather new development in the field of anti-racism in education, the reference to and use of spirituality is explored by Ragini Sharma and Julia Arbuckle as well as by Nicole Seck. In their article, Sharma and Arbuckle note that one of the challenges of anti-racism education in schools is to offer programs for students that are not only effective but also inclusive and non-blaming and a positive experience for all students. They suggest that not many programs are effective in developing empathy, compassion or a sense of belonging among or between groups and bringing the whole school community together to create safe and caring schools. Sharma and Arbuckle then argue that it is an accepted truism that in education whatever is given attention grows. As such, by focusing on the negative aspects of racism and bullying, a negative space develops, one that creates fear and negativity among the school community. This becomes counter-productive and more detrimental to feeling of safety among students and the community. In their view, the challenge is to be able to educate all students about the importance of the universal human values of accepting differences to create a safe space where every student feels valued. As a model of employing spirituality to such an end, Sharma and Arbuckle discuss the Art of Living Foundation, an international humanitarian organization that has successfully provided human values education programs in both elementary and high schools across North America. By educating students about the universal human values of compassion and respect for all, this experiential program creates a sense of belongingness among the student body and the teachers. By awakening

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the feeling of connectedness with each other, the program builds on the desire of youth to feel they are valued and that they can make a difference to the world around them.

Nicole Seck writes that, under the aegis of a dogmatic neoliberal agenda wherein ideas surrounding spirituality and collectivism are scorned (only to be replaced by those of individualism and competition), it becomes evident that a sense of compassion needs to be re-stored in all of humanity. Seck's paper endeavours to re-emphasize that themes of spirituality, collectivism, healing and the sharing of narratives need be introduced into multiple level classrooms for the purpose of re-affirming children/youth of African descent of their sense of worth, particularly since the violent forces of colonial education have led them to negate their ancestries. In her view, "spiritual voicelessness" is an epidemic that has ravaged throughout mainstream schools and has resulted in high push out rates among high school students from marginalized communities. With the use of an Africentric paradigm in schools, which will promote orality, as well as the use of proverbs to teach students life lessons, Seck believes that children/youth of African descent will be shown a positive view of Africa and their ancestors. Additionally, these children/youth will gain insight about the many contributions Africa has made to the world, in terms of resources, living thinkers and philosophical ideas that are often appropriated by European thinkers.

### Conclusion

As you can see from the brief summary of articles in this book, the intent and focus of anti-racism educators and practitioners has grown immeasurably and despite considerable obstacles. With expanded theoretical underpinnings, creative experiments in poorly resourced and/or under-resourced classrooms and facing banishment in public and institutional discourse, it is remarkable to see the strength, resilience and commitment of those who are still struggling for classrooms and society to be free of racism. Whether in primary and secondary schools, in universities, law schools, community colleges and the workplace, this book looks at the importance of challenging racism in education and postulating anti-racism as the most viable tool in doing so.

I hope you find much you can use in this book and that you share it with your colleagues and friends.

*Charles C. Smith*