



# URBAN UPDATE

Urban Alliance on Race Relations Newsletter

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

For more than 30 year the Urban Alliance On Race Relations has worked to promote a healthy multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith environment. We have undertaken educational and research activities that promote racial and ethnic harmony. This is not an easy task. At the Urban Alliance we continue to look for new and innovative ways in which to do this work. We understand that combating racism while promoting inclusion and racial harmony is not static work. We recognize that in order to have any degree of success we must utilize current tools available to us and work in collaboration with other social justice groups.

In 2009 our work focused on promoting youth awareness on issues of equity, using new media to educate and solicit input, support the aspirations of young women and expand our network of partnerships. This has resulted in the successful creation of the "Freedom Youth Collective", the launch of a youth dedicated website, work with the Good Jobs For All Coalition and trusteeing of "Youth Tube". All these initiatives have proven valuable in the Urban Alliance's work to advance a racially just, inclusive and equitable Toronto.

While we have for a number of years, like many other organizations, struggled with sustainable funding we have been fortunate to be supported by a dedicated group



The New UARR Website [www.urbanalliance.ca](http://www.urbanalliance.ca)

of volunteers who make up the board of directors, without whose leadership the task at hand would be daunting. We have also been privileged to have staff and volunteers who have been enthusiastic and dedicated in doing their work.

Towards the end of the "Freedom Youth Collective" pilot project, Michelle Cho, our Program Coordinator for over three years, accepted a position with the Toronto District School Board. We wish her much success in her new role. At the same time we were delighted to welcome Ashley McFarlane who took over the role of Program Coordinator.

We also thank Professor Rick Sin, board member since 2007, who had to step down last year for his contribution and commitment to the work of the Urban Alliance. In addition, we welcome Oliver Walters, Malika Mendez and Jacinta Goveas to the board of directors.

As we venture into 2010 we must take the time to celebrate our achievements and prepare for the year ahead. We must take steps to ensure that we continue to voice the real concerns around stereotyping; as was done in the case of a magazine depiction of the murder of Aqusa Parvez as an honour killing. We must continue to use new media to put forth a counter analysis to popular media on the issues of race and inclusion. We must continue to highlight the interest and concerns of racialized youth as they struggle to establish their identities amidst a barrage of negative portrayal and low post-secondary attainment.

### GV CAMP and Urban Update on Activities

This spring marks the beginning of the UARR's three year Gender Violence and Community Accountability Media Project (GV CAMP). Made possible by grants from the Status of Women Canada, and Ontario Trillium Foundation, the initiative will address Gender Violence in Toronto by training youth in media literacy and production while building their leadership and storytelling skills so they can address instances of gender violence in their communities, city, and society as a whole.

The project will begin with crisis intervention workshops for youth workers in the city, and continue with workshops for the youth they work with. During the project youth will learn about sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and assault from an interactive, anti-oppressive framework. They will be given the tools to create media pieces around these topics and share their works with their community, schools, family and friends.

The goal of the project is to create a movement where young women - and in the second and third years young men - begin to address gender violence in their communities and their lives. We want our youth to become shapers of their communities and the world. Especially young racialized women who are especially at risk of being oppressed in our society.

We will be working side by side with our project partners Gashanti UNITY, The People Project, Our Collective Dreams, YWCA, Action for Neighbourhood Change

The Urban Alliance would like to thank our funders: the Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Women's Secretariat, Status of Women Canada, and the City of Toronto for their financial support. As well, our appreciation goes to all our volunteers whose hard work, dedication and commitment have made what the Urban Alliance is today.

In Solidarity,  
*Sharon Simpson*



Malvern, Sister Scripture, The Set It Off Ladies, and METRAC to engage their youth and utilize METRAC's gender violence awareness resources.

Videos, articles, photography, poetry and other media will be available on our Freedom Youth Collective website: [www.freedomyouth.ca](http://www.freedomyouth.ca), which already contains a wealth of youth-produced media created in our Making Noise Media Camps and workshops over the last three years. Community Screenings, interactive multi-media events, and even a mini-film festival are in the works for Making Noise. Stay tuned and spread the word.

In addition to our new Gender Violence initiative the Urban Alliance has continued its coalition work in public education, anti-racism, and racial profiling. We held a well attended meeting with our Toronto Coalition for Equity in Education to follow up on the Falconer Report, talked about the presence of police officers in schools, school closures and Bill 177. We met with Social Planning Toronto to discuss what came up at the meeting on the Falconer Report and discussed future organizing. Partnering with SPT, we made deputation to the Toronto District School Board regarding the Learning Opportunities Grant. More recently, we have joined the No to Bill 94 Coalition, to create a public movement against the banning of the niqab (face veil).

For more information on what the UARR is up to please visit our new website at [www.urbanalliance.ca](http://www.urbanalliance.ca).

Ashley McFarlane,  
Project Coordinator

### Non/No to Bill 94 Coalition By Farrah Khan



Quebec Premier Jean Charest has proposed legislation which, if approved by the National Assembly of Quebec, would deny essential government services, public employment, educational opportunities, and health care to people who wear facial coverings. Bill 94 specifically targets Muslim women who wear the niqab (face veil). The bill is an exaggerated response to a manufactured crisis that will allow the government to deny women services to which they are entitled. A truly democratic society is one in which all individuals have the freedom of religious expression and a right to access public services.

In response to the proposed legislation community members, violence against women groups, community organizations (including the Urban Alliance on Race Relations), Muslim young women collectives, and student unions came together to mobilize communities and have Bill 94 withdrawn immediately, as it has no place in a democratic state that values autonomy, liberty and justice. The Non/No Bill 94 campaign was created collaboratively between people in Toronto and across Canada, our statement has been endorsed by over 35 organizations, and we have been organizing with much response through viral campaigns, public information sessions, letter writing parties, press conferences and rallies.

Our hard work as a coalition, along with other mobilizing movements against Bill 94, has paid off. On May 18, 2010 public hearings on Bill 94 were commenced before the Quebec National Assembly. The hearings were scheduled to continue for the three remaining weeks in the government session before their scheduled two month break. On May 20th, the hearings into Bill 94 were cut short and suspended until August.

The only reason given by the Quebec government for the abrupt end to the hearings was that there were 'scheduling' issues.

Bill 94 has currently only passed through a first reading, the second will be happening after the public consultations, and could result in an abandonment of the Bill altogether. Up to this point there had been very few oral deputations endorsing the bill. Most of the deputations spoke to the many gaps in the legislation and all of the potential problems that could unfold if it were to pass. It became evident at the hearings that the Bill had been put together rather hastily.

On May 18th the Coalition held a No Bill 94 Day of Action. It went extremely well with supporters from across Canada calling and writing to Quebec Premier Jean Charest and other politician, as well as making videos, blogging and posting on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. In Toronto, approximately 300 people gathered outside of the Bureau de Quebec to silently demonstrate against Bill 94. Demonstrators held signs reading 'the government has no place in the closets of the nation' and 'Bill 94 sanctions discrimination'. There was also a well-attended press conference in which numerous community agencies and members spoke out against Bill 94. In Kingston Waterloo and North York, Ontario, community members held well-attended letter writing events.

Bill 94 is not a law yet and the growing opposition movement we are part of can ensure that it will never be. There will be a debrief meeting in June. We are glad we have the UARR's support to make sure that no woman is denied essential services based on what she is wearing.

**Time is now for bigger role from Blacks**

By Gary Pieters

In the Greater Toronto Area and across Canada, Black History Month inspires Canadians of all diversities to take the opportunity to recognize and educate themselves about the legacy, achievements and contributions of black Canadians to this nation's history, culture and heritage.

My perspective is that black history is Canadian history, and this ongoing awareness is important in making the invisible visible, with the goal that black Canadian contributions to this nation's social, economic, cultural and political landscape will be understood, celebrated and shared by all Canadians.

The three levels of government have taken a step in the right direction by issuing proclamations and declarations of observance of Black History Month in their jurisdictions. Despite these efforts, I believe that many Canadians still do not even know that February is Black History Month.

"The Time is Now" is the theme the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) has chosen to kick off this decade (2010-2019). It is time for individuals, groups, institutions and the media to join or spotlight efforts to include the black Canadian experience in our diverse mosaic. It is time to inspire people of all diversities to put all the missing pieces together to create a full and accurate depiction of the historical and current contributions of black Canadians to the building and development of Canada.

With another Black History Month in progress, wider society should reach out to ensure that the success and excellence of black Canadians is fully represented and reflected at all levels of this modern 21st century state. From slavery to the Underground Railroad, from emancipation to

generational settlements, from Confederation to current events, more than 400 years of black participation in the Canadian story are rooted in the DNA of every province and territory.



According to 2006 census data from Statistics Canada, Canada has about 31 million people of whom 783,795 are black, about 2.5 per cent of the total population. The census data further reveal that the Greater Toronto Area is home to about 352,000 black Canadians, while the black population of Ontario is 473,000. The implication for the social geography of the GTA is significant, as

Ontario is home to more than 60 per cent of the country's black population. coalition or the extent of its influence in the policy-making process.

The fact that blacks constitute the third largest visible minority in the Greater Toronto Area behind Chinese and South Asians demonstrates their potential to influence the future leadership, social progress and economic competitiveness of the GTA, Ontario and Canada.

Equity in society demands equity of representation. The time is now to incorporate black Canadian diversity at all levels of decision-making in Canada, including the judiciary, legislatures, tribunals, agencies, boards and commissions and related power structures.

Recently, I was reminded that in the federal cabinet, the Supreme Court of Canada and the Ontario Court of Appeal, there is no black representation. In the Ontario cabinet, there is one black minister, who also happens to be the sole black member of the Ontario

Legislature. In the City of Toronto, the most diverse city of Canada, where I live and work, there is only one black city councillor.

One is not enough! It is time to correct this imbalance and close the representation gap that exists in the political power structures of the GTA, Ontario and Canada.

The time is now for black Canadians to get involved, engaged and empowered to participate in campaigns and elections as candidates, supporters and registered voters in every province, especially Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

The time is now for black Canadians to put forth their candidacies for appointments to agencies, boards and commissions, and for these organizations to reach out and act to make these bodies

more representative. There are many black achievers dispersed across the cities, provinces and territories of this vast nation with the training and talent to ensure their recruitment and participation.

Young people will become what they see. We must reach out to the next generation of black Canadian young people, who are the emerging leaders, and provide them with hope and the means to make a difference in transforming representation to better reflect an inclusive multicultural society.

The representation of black Canadians is a vital issue as we move forward into this new decade – all of us must do our part to build a more inclusive society. The time is now.

*Gary Pieters is an elementary school vice-prin-*

**Race Matters Forum Highlights**

By Kelly Pritchard

On March 12, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and five community groups commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of



Racial Discrimination with a public forum on why race still matters. Canada has a rich diversity of races, cultures and faiths. We have a liberal immigration policy, and currently have the highest rate of immigration in the developed world. Statistics Canada predicts that by 2031, one in three Canadians will belong to a visible minority, and one in four will be foreign born.

Canada has a well-intentioned but vague official Multiculturalism policy. As the panel discussion made clear, Canada's political and social institutions continue to pose significant barriers to the equal participation and integration of visible minorities into Canadian society. The reality is that race still matters.

The meeting was well attended and all participants spoke with insight and passion. As the panel members highlighted, racial discrimination continues to take place in a number of overt and more subtle ways, including racial profiling by the police; confusing, time-consuming and expensive procedures for addressing human rights violations; and the difficulty of seeking true justice in the all-too-common event of hate crimes.

The audience members also testified to the ongoing significance of racism. Several felt that more concerted action was required to "bring down the tent" of institutionalized racism. There was a lively debate on practical ways to address the underrepresentation of visible minorities in the decision-making process. The rich and thoughtful ideas generated highlight the need to have more community dialogues to address the continued exclusion of visible minorities from Canadian political life. As the dialogue made clear, alternative structures, which are broad-based and inclusive, are needed in order to continue pressing for fairness for racialized and marginalized groups in Canadian society.

*Kelly Pritchard is a volunteer at the UARR.*

Videos from the forum can be viewed on our website at [www.urbanalliance.ca](http://www.urbanalliance.ca)

The UARR Cordially Invites you to the  
*35th Anniversary and Awards Dinner*

*Honoring Our Past,  
Strengthening Our Future*



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**  
*Social Justice Activist & Professor Emeritus  
Marvyn Novick*

**EMCEE**  
*Community Activist and  
Former UARR Award Recipient  
Angela Robertson*

*Thursday, September 30, 2010  
Reception & Silent Auction: 6pm  
Dinner: 7pm*

*Bright Pearl Restaurant  
358 Spadina Ave  
2nd Floor, Toronto  
416-979-3988*

*Ticket Price \$100.00  
(\$70.00 tax receipt upon request)*

*RSVP and Ticket Reservation:  
Yumei Lin  
416-703-6607 ext. 5  
fax: 416-703-4415  
email: [info@urbanalliance.ca](mailto:info@urbanalliance.ca)*

## Work for All: The NFB's Campaign to Address Racism in the Workplace

By Kelly Pritchard



On Friday, April 9, 2010, representatives from the Urban Alliance on Race relations joined employment equity personnel from the public and private sectors at a screening and discussion of the Work for All: Stop Racism in the Workplace film series. Work for All is a collaborative initiative between Human Resources and Social Development and the National Film Board of Canada designed to encourage employees and the public to think about and discuss issues related to racism in the workplace. The workshop is designed to provide participants with the tools to lead effective anti-racism programs within their organizations.

The film Still Waiting for Justice is an all too familiar account of a racialized person's fight for dignity in the face of willful disregard by his colleagues and superiors. Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Employee Michael McKinnon filed a human rights complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario in 1988. The Tribunal reached its first decision, which was subsequently appealed, in 1998. It found that the Ministry was a poison work environment, where indifference towards racism resulted in aboriginals' careers being stymied.

It reinforced the perception of the Ministry as a paramilitary environment, pervaded by a rigid code of silence. It found that the Ministry as a whole, including the Deputy Minister and Minister, was implicated in racism. The Tribunal's proposed remedy to the systemic racism was to train managers to more effectively handle human rights violations.

The Tribunal's ruling resulted in an unmistakable backlash. Ministry employees filed reprisal complaints - which

were all subsequently dismissed as frivolous - in an attempt to drive McKinnon out of the workplace. Personnel who had been found guilty of racism were advanced. The Tribunal's second decision showed that the Ministry had failed to comply with the remedy, which had been implemented in bad faith. The Tribunal decided that the whole ministry had to be part of the solution. 18 years, two months, and millions of taxpayers' dollars later, McKinnon is still awaiting a resolution.

The workshop participants expanded on a number of themes from the film. They agreed that racism is still prevalent across the board, although it has become more covert. Despite repeated anti-racism initiatives, the level of understanding remains basic. Most organizations initially respond with shock or disbelief when confronted with the issue of racism, and when denial is the predominant response, it is difficult to deal objectively with the situation.

The participants identified ongoing gaps in existing anti-racism programs. One limitation of existing training programs is that they don't allow

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participants to identify with what victims of racism are feeling. To be effective, programs must therefore strive to foster greater empathy. A second weakness is that programs in many organizations are not tied to any sort of economic incentives, which leads to a weak commitment by managers. If leadership is not on board, subordinates are not likely to risk their jobs by taking a stand. Promoting stronger leadership and consistent messaging are therefore of critical importance, along with strengthening transparency and accountability.

Based on the book by Carl James, Making It tells the success stories of a group of Black Torontonians who have defied the odds to make their childhood dreams come true. The protagonists reveal some of the stereotypes and challenges they had to overcome along the way.

*Kelly Prtichard is a volunteer at the UARR.*

*Work For All is an online film project about racial discrimination on the job. The NFB will be making films, blogging, and posting resources that promote diversity in all parts of society. Please visit: <http://workforall.nfb.ca/>*

**The UARR acknowledges the generous support of:**

Ontario Trillium Foundation  
 Ontario Women's Directorate  
 Status of Women Canada  
 City of Toronto  
 Canda Help Organization  
 NARCC  
 Labour Community Services  
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