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READINGS IN RACE RELATIONS

Volume 9, Number 2

Equity In The  
New City of Toronto



URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS

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Readings in Race Relations

Volume 9, Number 2

Equity In The  
New City of Toronto

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# Editorial

## Downloading, Downsizing and Downright Discrimination: How Does It Stop at the Municipal Level?

Now that a new Council for the City of Toronto has been elected, and has established a Task Force on Community Access and Equity, it is an appropriate time to reflect on how this new municipal government can respond to the issues of racism and equity. The Toronto Transition Team which was responsible for recommending a blueprint for change, has noted: "We must seize this opportunity to ensure Toronto will be an economically, socially, culturally and environmentally thriving city that works five years, a decade, a generation from now." The Transition Team also recognized "that racism and other forms of intolerance are a threat to the civic community."

How high should our expectations be for this new municipal government? First, we need to recognize that this new City of Toronto has been created against the wishes, it seems, of the majority of its residents--by a provincial government that holds to what might be described as a survivalist, populist, enterprise culture. This culture of neo-conservative realism uses language such as value for money, cost-effectiveness, rationalization, efficiencies, performance-related reviews, output measures, cost indicators and privatization as the basis for driving its agenda. This culture expects everyone to do more for themselves and to free themselves from the shackles of the local 'nanny' state.

In this world--and it is certainly not unique to the

present Ontario government-- the ideology of government is to actually diminish and dismantle government. The holders of government power do not appear to believe in government. Notions of public service and the language of equity, anti-racism, disadvantage, discrimination, poverty and justice is shunned.

In this climate it will clearly be more difficult for the new City of Toronto to assume its primary responsibility which the Transition Team describes as "to promote and protect the public good, the common interest". With this enormous weight of fiscal and ideological downloading, the new City of Toronto will have very little maneuverability to seize any new vision. When the fundamental democratic responsibilities

of civic governance are being questioned and undermined, are we merely grasping at straws of hope in imagining that the new City will be able to seriously commit itself to the notions of equity and inclusiveness?

When the political and fiscal amalgamating pressures clearly indicate a counter-direction to the principles of diversity and equity, are we left wallowing in the realms of elusive dreams and illusionary ideals?

### Recapturing The Equity Agenda

How do we overcome the easy withdrawal into pessimism, and how do we work within and challenge the prevailing political and fiscal climate?

One of the first problems that needs to be

addressed is that of language and specificity. Concepts such as equity, racism, inclusiveness, access, citizenship and civic participation are full of ambiguity at the best of times--of language, of power, of uncertain realities, and of trying to fix them temporarily when in fact, they are in constant flux. And this ambiguity has permitted the easy appropriation of these same terms by the world of doublespeak. The concepts have become misused and suffered further obfuscation in the linguistic worlds of political rhetoric and bureaucratize.

Our first challenge is therefore, to address this burden of linguistic confusion and uncertainty. We need to reclaim the language by collectively adopting more specific ways of talking about these concepts and principles. We cannot persist in inhabiting a world that no longer exists where we could resort to lazy rhetorical flourishes and moralistic excesses and naively expect it to be enough of an impetus to create change.

Social change in many ways is a linguistically constituted activity. Changes in modes of thought provide the means of framing the issue, the better to address it. Thus the history of race relations

in the past decade or so might best be read as a history of what people have learnt to say, rather than as a history of concrete accomplishment. It might be hoped for example, that the common experience regardless of their actual communal, religious or political affiliation, will break down. The glib implications of the term 'racial minority' may be increasingly challenged and evoke continuing unease as to its meaningfulness in a Toronto of the 21st century. The term 'racial minority' also clearly fails to capture the dynamic and interactive process by which human identity is managed over time. As Antoni Shelton's article warns, we should beware the trend towards racial nationalism. We should therefore, pay closer attention to our language and concepts as we struggle to find a mode of discourse that can do justice to our experience.

Secondly, as the Toronto Transition Team itself says, finely-worded principles and "a mission statement has meaning only if there is the necessary capacity within the organization to make it happen". These principles do not happen just because one says they should. In other words, we need to translate the language of organizational systems into results-oriented initiatives that will have a

measurable impact on equity.

While this issue of Currents looks at how we can begin to reformat the issue of racism and equity into the context of municipal responsibilities in such areas as policing, human services, economic development, and urban planning, much of the analyses are equally applicable to the other levels of government and other institutional sectors.

Issues of racism and equity can no longer be dealt with on the margins of institutional life with constant pleadings for more of the same: tokenistic, add-on supports. This issue of Currents looks at how equity issues instead can be moved with confidence to the very centre of civic life and ingrained into the organizational culture of not only the new municipal government, but in every institutional sector. We must adopt the right language, the right systems and procedures, and also the right attitude that simply does not permit the marginalization and exclusion of large sections of the population from fully participating in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the City. ☺

*Tim Rees*

# The Context

## The Pursuit of Equity as a Municipal Task: The City of Toronto as a Model

The diversity of Toronto is exploding. This diversity includes not just characteristics such as age, education, gender, language, sexual orientation, mental and physical disability, religion, ethnicity and race but also an increasing diversity in lifestyles, values, power relations and life chances. Diversity is all the differences and dissimilarities among people. These differences and expectations are based on any characteristic that helps shape a person's attitude, behaviour and perspective. Diversity is inclusive and about everyone.

How we manage this explosion of diversity will have a direct impact on the future of our city. The City of Toronto is uniquely positioned to adopt and pursue this new proactive paradigm of diversity in innovative and creative ways. The new city must move beyond the old and limited paradigm of merely reacting to and addressing in inadequate fashion the present and residual effects of discrimination and inequalities. The utilization and enjoyment of the positive attributes of diversity requires the pro-active efforts of the municipal government to not merely recognize and tolerate this diversity, but to respect, value and nurture it.

If we are to have a more civil and equitable society, grounded on the richness of all our diversity, it will only be as a result of positive action, not simply the absence of discrimination. It has to move beyond finely worded policies, and the mere compliance with legislation. And as the Ombudsman of Ontario, Roberta Jamieson argues, rather than being a

"cost", it is an investment. An inclusive and equitable

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*"We cannot afford a tribalistic society segmented and segregated by ethnic, racial, social and economic status."*

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approach to diversity releases human potential measurable on the bottom line. If we provide opportunities for everyone to engage in the many useful activities which need our attention, our economic health would demonstrably increase, and we would not find immigrants, people who are poor or People of Colour singled out as the culprits causing social and economic decline. Once we can get past the unstated fear that practicing equity cuts down the size of "our piece of

the pie," we will find that when space is created so more people can get involved, the bigger the pie becomes.

The consequences of abdicating responsibility for assuming a proactive role in pursuing a civil society that strengthens our diversity can all too clearly be seen in the history of racial strife in major urban centres throughout the United States. We cannot afford a tribalistic society segmented and segregated by ethnic, racial, social and economic status.

Inequities hurt. It hurts us as a society, socially, politically and economically. Toronto can no longer afford the economic and social waste that results from excluding whole groups of people from being able to fully participate in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the city. It creates victims out of those it targets. It traps all of us in a web of frustration, anger and pain. It kills motivation and productivity; it creates apathy and alienation; it breeds tension and unrest. These tensions can quickly erupt into conflict, violence and disorder. ☹

## Challenging Urban Cultural Tribalism

This paper was presented at the Jane Jacob's Conference, Toronto, 1997

by Antoni A. Shelton

The common sense revolution and the amalgamation of Toronto are instances of social change happening across the planet: Dismantling of equity policies is also happening in tandem with the emergence of chronic unemployment, attacks on organized labour, and the elimination of the welfare state.

Implicit in the globalization of capitalism, is a socio-economic philosophy of neo-conservatism, which regards only competition as the rational driving force of human personality and the creative generative principle of human progress.<sup>i</sup> Due to technological advancements and the emergence of highly skilled, but low paid workers, mainly in Asia and countries south of the equator, Canadian and U.S. governments have accepted chronic unemployment. And if this wasn't failure enough, workers in these same countries are facing possible unemployment without an adequate social safety net.

When local and national economies recover in places like Toronto, the unemployed are often not rehired. The production of wealth can proceed without them.<sup>ii</sup> We read about corporations announcing record profits while at the same time laying off workers and giving early retirement packages. There is overwhelming evidence that we are moving into a new social epoch, marked by the disruptive presence of a substantial "underclass". Others have referred to the marginal class, but I believe underclass more accurately captures a group of people that have no

formal means of survival. They are neither supported by the private or public sector. A shrinking work force isn't the only casualty of this new epoch. Social welfare and social justice programs are increasingly being cut-back, and in some cases legislative obligation is removed altogether.

The rationalization for allowing neighbourhoods in Toronto to become more and more similar to "Hells Kitchen", in Spanish Harlem, or South Central Los Angeles: failure of neighbourhoods and individuals relates back to their inability to successfully compete and move towards self-reliance. The strong survive, with less and less moral and legal obligation to the weak.

### Assimilation

Why did Torontonians vote for Provincial and City political leaders that openly confess a neo-conservative ideology? In other words, it was no secret that if certain governments got into power, they would begin to dismantle the social welfare and social justice framework built by previous governments with the assistance of citizen groups and even some in the private sector. Have some

Torontonians become tribalistic and selfish, hoping to profit from lower taxes, and shrugging their shoulders regarding the needs of their less competitive less successful neighbour? What is particularly interesting to me as a subject for discussion, are the individuals and communities that are traditionally marginalized because of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, creed and disability, seem to also succumb to neo-conservative ideology. Celebrated Canadian author, Neil Bissoondath, (born on the island of Trinidad with South Asian ancestry), has become one of the most public and cogent proponents of governments in Canada moving away from diversity and multiculturalism as sanctioned policy at the local and national levels. In Bissoondath's own words: "I did not come here to be labelled as an ethnic or a member of the multicultural community, or to be coddled with preferential treatment, nurtured with special grants, and then to sit on the sidelines and watch the world go by. I came here to be a member of the mainstream of the Canadian society. I do not want affirmative action; I expect fairness". Admittedly, as Bissoondath points out, their

should be fairness for all Canadians to compete and enjoy the full benefits of society. But in places like Toronto, fairness for some is an illusion not because they can't compete but there are barriers that result from racism, and prejudice against identifiable individuals and groups. And herein lies the contradiction, too many ethno-racial minorities like Bissoondath, who have either not witnessed barriers, or are equipped to overcome such barriers, are eager to accept the mantle of the neo-conservatives and, "emphasize the "I" and de-emphasizing the "we".<sup>iii</sup>

In some ways, similar to questions related to self-government for Native people, or separation for Quebec, Toronto is struggling with what the "We", means in a contemporary sense. It is my contention that diversity in Toronto is an extremely powerful force. Politically, socially, economically the potential is very real. Toronto's true world ranking status will not be achieved until it comes to grips with this diversity.

It is a Canadian phenomenon, (that the largely white, Christian-males of British ancestry, that traditionally defined Toronto's social and economic make-up) are increasingly becoming a minority, yet they continue to behave as a majority. Unbridled competition in Toronto, will serve to continue this unhealthy contradiction. In other words, people who are busy seeing their neighbours as competitors and not partners in building a sustainable community are people that failed to understand the deeper meaning of what Toronto is and can become. Toronto hospitals, schools, municipal

departments are just a few areas that could begin to reflect a global and truly diverse society. Where Bissoondath's analysis really falls down, relates to his total ignorance of how economic and political power was consolidated in Canada and how it has been maintained. By definition, mainstream Canada is an exclusive group arranged by the white males I spoke of earlier, and has denied membership to many individuals and communities that had much more natural rights to this soil than Bissoondath will ever have...natives, women, Francophones, Blacks, Chinese, Jews, Japanese are all communities that were at one point refused membership into mainstream Canadian society. And it wasn't because of multiculturalism. In sum, the real cult is *competition*.

Toronto desperately requires the vitality, energy and optimism of its diverse people. To borrow a phrase from John F. Kennedy, 'don't ask what the traditional way of life in Toronto can do for you, but what you can do for Toronto'. Silencing Toronto's diverse communities by simply assimilating them into the so-called mainstream on economic grounds is not a new experiment, and certainly not worthy of our collective imagination.

It is my belief that non-white communities in general, haven't responded very well to the new political realities in Toronto. Rather than engaging in the debate for what is the new civic realities in Toronto, so that workplaces and institutions become more inclusive and meaningful for the greater civic body, we're

opting for feel good rhetoric. Contracts, jobs, and cultural decisions are being made without open and fair debate. Often times the police department is the wiping dog for our collective frustration with the declining state of some neighbourhoods and schools.

### Racial Nationalism

There is cultural and racial experience, and at the same time there is a Canadian experience. We must connect the two and find our answers in this connection, not in the isolation of one over the other. Non-whites are becoming even more invisible on the national and local scene, with occasional unconnected exceptions. Exceptions are crime, immigration problems and sports. Notwithstanding this reality, I would like to suggest that in many ways non-whites (especially refugees and new immigrants) are the moral center of Toronto's complex hybrid culture. They push democratic culture toward fruition, with the most obvious test being the inclusion-not assimilation-of-their difference.

If we are to ever attain an inclusionary society, we will need to redirect our attention from race-based identity politics to the importance of Canadian citizenship. Can we think less exclusively about what it means to be a Torontonians?

There are clear pitfalls with the pursuit of rigid identity politics. Blaming victims isn't going to help us identifying real barriers to full equality. And individuals internalizing victimization, is also not going to help us become empowered.

The logic of racial nationalism leads a group to



envision itself as necessarily alienated from Canadian culture at large. It defines itself in its very essence as being victimized by the ideas and structures it opposes.

In attempting to dislodge the hegemonic idea of whiteness some advocates are replacing it with an equally restrictive concepts of Blackness, Asianess or South Asianess. This is myopic. Ideological segregation yields little more than feel-bad rhetoric.

### Citizenship

The necessary shift away from racial essentialism, bridges ideological differences, and can be pursued by invoking the language of citizenship.

Race is a manifestation of a larger Canadian project. It conceives of the problems of non-whites as inseparable from the problems of Canada, with race and citizenship as twin points on a moral compass, alternately viewing the issues raised by one perspective from the position of the other.

Immigrants and minorities shouldn't be viewed by both conservatives and liberals as "problem people", but rather as fellow Canadian citizens that face unique challenge, complicated by being non-white.

Citizen-based commonality can overcome differences in race and class. Conservatives are simply wrong to incant the 'personal responsibility' mantra if they are not also prepared to help people who so desperately need to be helped.

Those people languishing in the drug infested, economically depressed, crime-ridden areas of Toronto... those people with medical, engineering and law degrees driving cabs-those people are our people and we must be connected to them. It transcends politics and policy. It is a moral imperative. If we fail this test, we no longer can be able to feel proud of the planet's most cosmopolitan city that works.

In conclusion, I'm hoping that we see the Native and Quebec experience as a possible alternative to The

"Toronto" question. By that I mean, Toronto can be looked at as a city-state, that is separate from Ontario. The size of Toronto, and its diverse wealth might propel it forward in achieving an alternative national structure that can truly be sustained in the 21<sup>ST</sup> century. ☺

*Antoni Shelton is the Executive Director of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.*

Notes:

1. Dr. Gregory Baum, *The Practice of Citizenship in Today's Society*, presented to the annual general meeting of the The Social Planning council of Metro Toronto., Toronto, 1996.pp.1.
2. *ibid.*, at page 2
3. Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, 1994, excerpted in *Saturday Night Magazine*, October, 1994, pp.22.
4. *op.cit.*
5. Robert Boyton, *The New Intellectuals*, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1995 pp.64-70

# Community and Race Relations at the Local Level in the United States:

by Carol Tator

The dominant demographic trend in the United States over the last three decades has been suburbanization and White flight, combined with the downloading of human services from federal, state and local authorities to inner cities. This phenomenon has worked to intensify the geographic, social and economic separation and marginalization of minority communities, particularly Whites from poor Blacks across America.

Suburban growth, has resulted in the inner cities of the United States being left with the lion's share of responsibility for managing the priorities that relate to issues of ethno-racial diversity and equity, as well as the problems of welfare, health, education, social housing and other services. The downloading of the responsibility for human services to the poor and minorities living in these inner cities has served to deepen schisms between ethno-racial minorities, particularly African Americans, and White Americans.

The flight of White communities and businesses, with little concerns for the common good, permitted Whites to satisfy liberal ideas revolving around activist government. The accelerated growth of the suburbs has made it possible for many Americans to pursue certain civic ideals (involvement in schools, cooperation in community endeavours, a willingness to support certain public services, but which largely benefited middle or upper class Whites) within a smaller universe of local communities. These communities have been safeguarded in significant ways

from the acute failure (crime, welfare, social housing, urban decay) of the inner cities of Detroit, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and most other urban communities in the country.

The growing division between city and suburb lessened White self-interest in making such social investment. In the United States, in 1991, 96.7 percent of White children were educated outside of the decaying schools of the inner cities. Many of the more affluent citizens turned to private service providers, including independent and parochial schools, private police and security services, private recreational clubs, and private transportation companies.

The past two decades have seen a significant strengthening of the ideological underpinnings of political conservatism and with it an ever increasing polarization of American society. This polarization is built on mutually reinforcing divisions of the electorate: taxpayers against tax recipients; those who emphasize individual responsibility against those who emphasize group/collective rights; proponents of deregulation and an unfettered market place against supporters

of the regulatory role of the state and of policies protecting or advancing the interests of those who are vulnerable in society. These social policies in the United States have led to a spiral of decline. The lack of local accountability has led to cities with an immeasurably poorer quality of life for millions of largely non-white Americans.

## Canadian Municipal Race Relations Committees

Based on my background working with both municipal and other government ethno-racial advisory committees since the eighties, I think it is not too sweeping a generalization to argue that most of these committees have operated with rather loose, unfocused mandates, and equally unclear goals and objectives. These committees have functioned largely on the periphery of their decision-making systems. They have little, if any, authority, influence or power. They are there to listen, advise, consider, suggest, and monitor, rather than to initiate, advocate, strategize, plan, implement, and empower. Their primary modus operandi has been reactive rather than pro-active.

Annual budgets are often devoid of action plans and the required resources necessary to combat racism and other forms of discrimination. Today, constrained by even less fiscal resources, most of these committees operate without the support of full-time coordinators to support the work of the committee. They operate outside the mainstream political and bureaucratic processes. Their role is understood as largely an external function, rather than integrated into the political process. There are no clear lines of authority between committees and the political process. In most cases, there is no direct access. The politicians who should be front and centre as active and accountable participants, quite often play a drop-in-role.

All of these weaknesses serve to limit the contribution that community Committee members, however committed, can make. One could also pose the questions of: how are committee members selected; what criteria are established which might help ensure that those who would make the most significant contribution are chosen; how can the active participation of politicians committed to access and equity

be ensured; what resources are provided in terms of knowledge and skill development for members of the committee. These are central questions that deserve the attention of our politicians.

### The Challenge

How do we respond to these challenges in the current climate. In considering methods of strengthening each local community's effectiveness in dealing with racism and other forms of discrimination, I believe that, in many respects, the Metro Toronto model was unique in having an elected Standing Committee dealing with anti-racism issues. This model ensures that the concerns and issues related to ethno-racial equity are integrated into the political process. The community connection therefore is explicitly delineated, in addition to having a bureaucratic mechanism with an internal and external responsibility. However, even with the strengths of the Metro model, community input can be made more effective, efficient and streamlined. We still need direct access, and clearer lines of authority.

### The Public Square

Let me conclude by offering some final thoughts inspired by Cornell West, the African American philosopher, theologian, activist and, writer. He comments in his book called, *Race Matters*:

"We must focus our attention on the public square - the common good that undergirds our national and global destinies. The vitality of any public square ultimately depends on how much we care about the quality of our lives together."

What I believe can be accomplished is to begin the process of trying to create a different and clearer vision to guide us- a vision in which the public square is not dismantled but enhanced. We need to begin thinking of new ways, to express our sense of common good, a common good which ensures the rights of all minorities and others, who are becoming more vulnerable with each passing day.☺

*Carol Tator is a past President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, author of a number of critical studies in race relations in Canada, and a lecturer at York University.*

## The Demographics Of Toronto's Diversity

According to 1996 census data, approximately 48 percent of the population of the new amalgamated City of Toronto are immigrants. By the year 2001, foreign-born residents will comprise the majority of the Toronto population and a majority of the population will be non-white.

Over 70,000 immigrants are coming to Toronto every year. Coming from 169 countries, over 100 languages are spoken in Toronto with approximately 42 percent of new immigrants speaking neither English nor French on arrival. A measure of the speed with which Toronto is being transformed is that in 1961 racial minorities comprised 3 percent of Toronto's population. In 1991, it was 30 percent and by the year 2000 it is projected that racial minorities will comprise 54 percent of the population. Before 1961, virtually all Toronto's immigrants (92 percent) came from Europe, including Britain. Today, European-born make up just 17 percent of Toronto's recent immigrants.

One in five of Toronto residents are immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1981. One in 10 arrived after 1991. Toronto's immigrant population grew at four times the rate of the non-immigrant population between the 1991 and 1996 censuses.

How can the municipality develop effective and cost-efficient policies and programs that are accessible and equitable for all sectors of this dramatically changing population? How can the municipality ensure that all members of the community are able to derive equal benefit

from services when the cultural, racial, and religious nature of the population is changing so rapidly?

### Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto

In ensuring equitable access and the elimination of ethno-racial discrimination, it is perhaps useful to look at the comparative life chances of various ethno-racial and Aboriginal communities as compared with the general population in Toronto.

The development of socio-economic indicators of ethno-racial equality provides us with a more solid foundation upon which to remedy the causes of inequality. Understanding the extent of inequality in various areas of life, such as employment, education, housing, etc. as it affects different ethno-racial and Aboriginal groups will allow for more precise, targeted and cost-effective interventions. In a study undertaken by Professor Michael Ornstein of the Institute of Social Research, York University, for the Metro Toronto Access and Equity Centre, the 1991 Canadian Census was used to examine the socio-economic position of ethno-racial groups in Toronto in the areas of education, employment, income and housing.

The analysis revealed huge inequalities among ethno-racial and Aboriginal communities in Toronto. Without wishing to repeat or simplify all the findings contained in the study, the following are just some selected highlights.

### Education

The Portuguese have the lowest levels: more than half of the Portuguese adult population, 54.5 percent (compared to the overall average of 15.5) have less than nine years of education, and just 26.7 percent are high school graduates (compared to 65.9 percent for all origins). The next lowest, the Italians and Greeks have about 40 percent high school graduates. The largest numbers of people without any high school are 27,500 Portuguese, 59,000 Italians, and 13,000 Greeks.

While 15.3 percent of adults over the age of 24 in Toronto have graduated from university, the lowest proportion of university graduates are Portuguese (2 percent), followed by Jamaicans, First Nations, Maltese, and Guyanese. With only six to seven percent university graduates being Trinidadian and Tobagonians, Greeks, Blacks and Africans, and Italians. Those groups with particularly high proportions of

university graduates include the Filipinos, Koreans, Jews and Egyptians with more than 25 percent graduates.

### Employment

At the time of the 1991 Census, the overall rate of unemployment in Toronto was 9.6 percent. The data shows that the ethno-racial groups with the highest unemployment rates were almost all non-European: Africans from specific nations (25.8 percent), Mexican and Central Americans (24.7 percent), Tamils (23.9 percent), Iranians (23.1 percent), "other" Arabs and West Asians (22.4 percent), Vietnamese (20.6 percent), Sri Lankan (20.5 percent), and First Nations people (19.7 percent). Youth unemployment rates (15 to 24 years of age) are an additional 5 or 6 points above these percentage rates for all groups, with the notable exception of Jamaicans where the overall unemployment rate is 16.7, while the rate for 15 to 24 year old Jamaicans is 29.2 percent.

The study found a surprising weak relationship between unemployment and education: groups with the most unemployment are not those with the least education. Non-European groups generally - and especially Mexican and Central Americans, "other" Arabs and West Asians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and First Nations people - face the greatest obstacles in converting their educational qualifications into jobs.

### Income

The average annual income from employment in Toronto in 1990 was \$31, 300. Tamils,

Sri Lankans, and Africans from specific countries, all with less than \$19,000 annual income have the lowest earnings, followed closely by the "other" East and Southeast Asians, Jamaicans, South Americans, Iranians, Vietnamese, and First Nations people.

### Poverty

While 19 percent of all families in Toronto are defined as living below the "low income cut-off", the data shows that the highest levels of poverty are the Arabs and

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*"Existing  
Municipal  
policies have been  
inadequate to the  
task and have  
failed."*

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West Asians, Latin Americans, and Blacks and Africans - 37.4, 33.9, and 33.5 per cent respectively.

Three in five children from specific African Nations live in poverty, along with more than half the children of Jamaican, Iranian, "other" Arab and West Asian, and Mexican and Central American origins, and more than two-fifths of First Nations children, and children of Tamil and Vietnamese background. Almost two-thirds of female lone parent families of Latin American origin, and more than half of ethno-racial groups of First Nations people, Blacks and

Africans, Caribbean, and Arabs and West Asians are below the poverty line.

### Acting on the Data

While the data from which the analysis is drawn is already five years old, and given that Toronto continues to receive approximately 70,000 immigrants a year, the 1991 data is certainly under-representing the magnitude and growth of ethno-racial inequality in Toronto today.

What should be of concern to the new City of Toronto in terms of changing priorities and the reallocation of resources, are those groups that are especially disadvantaged. Such disadvantage might be defined in terms of the combination of the proportion living in serious economic hardship, and experiencing very high unemployment and working in poor jobs, and with very low education. The following groups are shown to be the most disadvantaged in Toronto: members of First Nations, Africans, Jamaicans, Tamils, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, Vietnamese, Iranians, "other" Arabs and West Asians, Latin Americans and Hispanics.

While poverty, low education and unemployment exists within every ethno-racial group, the data shows that these problems are spread very unequally among ethno-racial groups.

The patterns of inequality in Toronto clearly appear to be largely determined on the basis of race.

The demographic data presents a very clear picture of the disparities and extent of ethno-racial and Aboriginal equality in Toronto.

This suggests two things. First, that notwithstanding the legislative articulation and recognition of the multicultural diversity of our society and local municipal policies dedicated to the principles of tolerance and equality, racial inequality continues to be a fundamental characteristic of the Toronto community. Ethno-racial communities continue to be marginalized and excluded from mainstream society.

Existing municipal policies have been inadequate to the task and have failed. Municipal leadership, as expressed through policy commitments, will have to be dramatically reshaped and be far more directive and prescriptive if they are to have any value for the future. Municipal policies have to

move beyond the language of "tolerating", "accommodating," "appreciating" and "celebrating" differences. Such language has been founded on the patently false assumption that justice and equality exist, apart from the occasional biased attitudes and behaviour of aberrant individuals. Such policies have failed to deal with the problems of systemic racism and are inadequate to the task of dismantling systems of inequality.

Secondly, the data provides direction to the new City of Toronto on where to target programs addressing social need in those areas of the community suffering the highest levels of disadvantage and deprivation. This kind of data is certainly critical in beginning to assess the needs of different ethno-racial groups,

undertaking further analysis of patterns of inequitable need of groups, and undertaking more targeted remedial action and thereby more efficient and effective use of limited municipal resources. Such data also provides the basis to begin to measure the success of equity-sensitive programs and services by undertaking regular equity impact assessments. ☺

*Notes:*

1. *Facts and Figures 1996 Immigration Overview Citizenship and Immigration Canada Ottawa 1997.*
2. *Ethno-Racial Inequality in Metropolitan Toronto. M. Ornstein. Metro Access & Equity Centre. Toronto, 1996.*

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Those in high places are more than the administrators of government bureaus.  
 They are more than the writers of laws.  
 They are the custodians of a community's ideals, of the beliefs it cherishes, of its permanent hopes, of faith which makes a community out of a mere aggregation of individuals

**Walter Lippman**

with thanks to Bart Sackrule  
 (North York Mayors' Committee)

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# Measuring Equity

## Defining Equity

Equity is about who gets what. Having said that, measuring equity is not as straightforward as one would like and depends upon such factors as: the criterion of equity which is adopted; the definition(s) of service which is employed; the units upon which distribution is to be assessed.

Inequity exists when individuals, because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability are:

- excluded from services or opportunities;
- treated differently and negatively;
- described or depicted as inferior;
- affected differentially and negatively by policies, programs or practices;
- subjected to direct or indirect harassment and or violence.

### By What Criteria is a Service Equitable?

Equity according to what one might describe as "universal criteria" suggests that

a service should be of the same quantity and quality for all individuals or groups. This approach takes the position that all should be treated the same regardless of attendant circumstances.

A second criteria is one determined by status. That is, differential treatment is determined by one's status group in the community such as age, sex, legal status, etc.

A third definition might be described as a "contractual criteria" wherein benefits are derived on the basis for example, on the level of community participation, power or control, or in proportion to the taxes paid.

A fourth criteria is on the basis of demand. That is, the level of community requests

and/or pressure determines the distribution of resources.

Finally is the criteria of need which is an externally-determined condition of need and where a variety of methods and standards are employed for assessing that need.

One should therefore be careful in not just asking "is it equitable?", but also "by what criteria is it equitable?" I am sure we can all identify various municipal services that are provided on the basis of universality, or by differential status of different groups, or by differential levels of demand, but it is suggested that the most important equity criteria in the allocation of resources is differential need. ☺

