



Beyond Good Intentions: Confronting Racial Discrimination through Solidarity

ONA Position Statement on Anti-Racism

We are deeply saddened and angered by the recent tragic deaths in the Black and Indigenous community. As the front line of health care in Ontario, ONA members understand that anti-Black racism, discrimination and hate have no place in health care or in broader society.

Protests continue to be held across the world after the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd. Here at home in Canada, on May 27, 2020, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, a 29-year-old Afro-Indigenous woman, died in police custody after her family called for mental health assistance. Only eight days later, Chantel Moore, an Indigenous woman from Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, died during a police “wellness check” in New Brunswick.

We can do better. We will listen to those with lived experience. We will educate ourselves. We will not be silent. We will continue to take action to end anti-Black racism and discrimination in health care.

During these difficult times let us support one another and channel our shared anger and grief to create meaningful change together.

ONA stands in solidarity with Black and Indigenous communities and allies in Canada and around the globe calling for justice. The equal treatment of our members, and the freedom from any forms of racism, discrimination and harassment in the workplace are core tenets of our union.

ONA strongly supports achieving health equity in our system, and advocates for the examination of policy issues through a “[social determinants of health](#)” lens. The intersection of race, income, housing, and other social determinants of health, place Black and Indigenous communities at great risk, as we are seeing through the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities with higher percentages of visible minorities. For example, the Toronto Board of Health recognizes that anti-Black racism is a public health crisis.

What ONA is Doing to Address and Take Action Against Racism

ONA’s priority is to continue to take proactive steps in the short and long term to address and take action against racial discrimination.

First, we are developing a consulting group of members to strengthen policies and approaches to anti-Black racism and racial discrimination. ONA will consult with the group of members to continue our work on addressing issues of racism, anti-Black racism.

These immediate steps will build on ONA’s 2019 Black History Month teleconnect and the 2020 Black History Month podcast, as well as the work of the membership Human Rights and Equity Team.

ONA's commitment is to work actively with Board members, staff and members to take proactive and corrective steps to facilitate more opportunities to identify, address and educate about anti-racism.

A number of workshops, events and articles in 2020 and 2021 will focus on the role of race and racism in health care as well as advancing human rights for nurses and health-care professionals, including:

- July 2020 – Digital offering to go live to start the conversation in regard to anti-Black racism and discrimination with a community focus. ONA will introduce the theme for the 2021 Human Rights & Equity Caucus, "Beyond Good Intentions: Confronting Racial Discrimination through Solidarity."
- November 2020 – Human Rights & Equity Caucus will be a digital opportunity. It will include breakout sessions to discuss social determinants of health and the impact of COVID-19 on the various racially diverse groups.
- February 2021 Black History Month – ONA will continue the dialogue in regard to the importance of recognizing anti-Black racism/discrimination in nursing and the challenges faced.
- November 2021 – Full-day Human Rights & Equity Caucus will focus on understanding the systemic nature of racial discrimination as well as the actions we can take to address stereotypes and unconscious bias.

The safety of our nurses and health-care professionals is of the utmost priority for ONA. If you are a member of ONA and you are being targeted or harassed at work due to racism and/or racial discrimination contact your Bargaining Unit President at any time. ONA will advocate for you, support and advise you regarding next steps.

June 2020

Resources

Anti-Racism Statements from Related Organizations

CFNU, "Canada's Nurses Condemn Anti-Black Racism" (June 2, 2020), online: <https://nursesunions.ca/canadas-nurses-condemn-anti-black-racism/>

RNAO, "RNAO Stands Together with our Black Sisters and Brothers (June 3, 2020), online: <https://rnao.ca/news/media-releases/2020/06/03/rnao-stands-together-our-black-sisters-and-brothers>

BCNU, "June 2020: BCNU Condemns Anti-Black Racism", online: <https://www.bcnu.org/about-bcnu/human-rights-and-equity/mosaic-of-colour-caucus>

OPSEU Coalition of Racialized Workers (CoRW), online: <https://opseu.org/event/deconstructing-racism-developmental-training/>

CUPE Anti-Racism Action Plan, online: <https://cupe.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/AROAP-FINAL.pdf>

Statement from Unions on Anti-Black Racism, online: <https://www.hsabc.org/news/statement-canadas-unions-anti-black-racism>

United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, online: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>

Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union, "A Message from NSGEU on Black Lives Matter" (June 2, 2020), online: https://nsgeu.ca/home_page/a-message-on-blm-from-nsgeu/21647/

Equity Data Tracking in Health Care

Race as a Social Determinant of Health - Racism and Public Health, online: <https://www.cpha.ca/racism-and-public-health>

City of Toronto, Addressing Anti-Black Racism as a Public Health Crisis in the City of Toronto, (June 8, 2020), online: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL17.9>

Race Based Data Is A Life Or Death Issue - Why Does The Government Keep Ignoring It?, online: <https://byblacks.com/main-menu-mobile/opinion-mobile/author/1158-melaynawilliams>

Statistics Canada will start collecting race-based data July 2020, Financial Post (June 11, 2020), online: <https://business.financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/canada-to-begin-gathering-race-data-in-julys-employment-report>

Black Experiences in Health Care Symposium & Report with focus on race based data collection, online: <https://www.healthcommons.ca/blackhealth/>

CBC "It has eaten a hole in my heart": Indigenous nurses call out systemic racism with life-or-death consequences (March 2, 2018), online: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/facing-race-the-current-s-town-hall-event-in-vancouver-1.4558134/it-has-eaten-a-hole-in-my-heart-indigenous-nurses-call-out-systemic-racism-with-life-or-death-consequences-1.4558954/>

History of Black Nurses

Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora*, University of Toronto Press (2011)

Professor / RN Keisha Jeffries publication: Recognizing history of Black nurses a first step to addressing racism and discrimination in nursing (May 11, 2020), online: <https://theconversation.com/recognizing-history-of-black-nurses-a-first-step-to-addressing-racism-and-discrimination-in-nursing-125538/>