Perspectives on Current Issues on Community and Race Relations in Canada

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by
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The Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Dedicated to bringing about a more harmonious Canada, which acknowledges its racist past, recognizes the pervasiveness of racism today, and is committed to a future in which all Canadians are treated equitably and fairly.

Mission
The CRRF is committed to building a national framework for the fight against racism in Canadian society. We will:
- shed light on the causes and manifestations of racism;
- provide independent, outspoken national leadership, and
- act as a resource and facilitator in the pursuit of equity, fairness and social justice.

Founding
In 1988, The Canadian Government reached an agreement with the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), acting on behalf of Japanese Canadian families who were interned and otherwise stripped of their human and civil rights during and after the Second World War. Known as the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement, the Government apologized on behalf of Canadians for those actions and provided compensation to those Japanese Canadian families who were wronged.

The NAJC also negotiated a contribution of $12 million on behalf of its community, to be matched by an equal amount from the Government of Canada, to create a one-time $24 million endowment fund to establish what is now known as the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF). The CRRF would, inter alia, assist all sectors, including communities, in understanding the true nature of racism and racial discrimination and to work towards its elimination.

Legislation and history
The Canadian Race Relations Foundation Act, Bill C-63, was passed in 1990 and was proclaimed in 1996 “…to facilitate throughout Canada the development, sharing and application of knowledge and expertise in order to contribute to the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination in Canadian society…”

The CRRF opened its doors in November 1997. A Crown Corporation and one of the portfolio agencies of Canadian Heritage, the CRRF operates at arm’s length from the Government of Canada. The CRRF also has registered charitable status. Its operating income is derived from the investment of the endowment fund, private donations and cost recovery fees/honoraria for goods and services.

Governance
The direction of the CRRF is vested in a board of directors consisting of a chairperson and up to 19 other members. An executive director, an ex-officio member of the board, manages the CRRF’s day-to-day operations. The Governor-in-Council, on the recommendation of the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) and the Minister of Canadian Heritage, appoints all members of the board and the executive director who serves as chief executive officer. According to the Act, the Board of Directors must meet a minimum of twice a year. By practice, effort is made to ensure Board representation from every province and territory, and the Board tries to meet three times a year in a city of a different province or territory each meeting.

Focus
In fulfilling its mission, the CRRF focuses on eliminating racism against racial minorities and Aboriginal peoples, with a particular emphasis on education and employment.
This is an extremely challenging time for any of us working in the area of race relations/anti-racism/equity/social justice in Canada, and indeed worldwide. It was therefore essential that I take a short cut to preparing this material. I decided to take Jeff Reitz at his word in responding to his request for “short background documents that might be helpful for discussion, including information on recent related activities.” During an unbelievably busy period, the most expedient way for me to do that was to offer you excerpts from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation’s newsletter, Perspectives, in which, through my Executive Director’s messages, I have summarized those relevant activities and current race relations issues facing us over the last few years through a few “snapshots” I look forward to our panel and to lively discussions of the current situation and the challenges that continue to face us all.

Dr Karen Mock Appointed as Executive Director
Perspectives 2001 - by Patrick Hunter

Dr Karen Mock has been appointed Executive Director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation effective October 15, 2001. Dr Mock is a registered psychologist and an expert on anti-racist education. Most recently, she served as chair of the Advisory Committee for Canada’s preparations for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism.

In announcing the appointment, Dr Hedy Fry, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism), said “Dr Mock brings to the Foundation a tremendous wealth of experience and a sound knowledge of race relations and the issues facing a multicultural, diverse Canadian society. Her national and international reputation, network and expertise will contribute a great deal to our collaborative efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination.”

Ending 12 years as the national director of the League for Human Rights of B’nai Brith Canada, Dr Mock was feted by the B’nai Brith whose executive vice-president, Frank Dimant, praised Dr Mock for making the League an “upstanding international human rights body”. Under her leadership, the League initiated public education campaigns, the Black/Jewish Dialogue, Women’s Interfaith Dialogue and Muslim/Jewish Dialogue as well as youth training programs. In addition Dr Mock directed a project for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship on “Combatting Hate”, a project on “Victim Impact of Racially Motivated Crime” for Ontario’s Commission on Systemic Racism in the Criminal Justice
System, as well as two projects on “Public Education Campaigns” and “Race Relations Training” for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

Dr Mock has also volunteered with a number of community and provincial organizations including the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the Anti-Racism Response Network, the Ontario Multicultural Association and the Anti-Racist Multicultural Educators’ Network.

“The work that the CRRF must do requires someone in its leadership role who has a sound knowledge of the Canadian anti-racism scene and someone who has earned the respect of colleagues,” said the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, chair of the CRRF’s board. “I think that Dr Mock suits this description very well. I believe I speak for the board in saying that we look forward to working closely with her.”

In an interview with share newspaper in Toronto, Dr Mock said that she is honoured to have been selected as the new Executive Director for the Foundation. “I believe in these times more than ever it is important that there is solidarity in the struggle to achieve equality and to counter racism and all forms of discrimination. I’m looking forward to continuing to work with so many colleagues in the anti-racist movement under the auspices of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, to strengthen the struggle against racism in Canada.”

**Canadian NGO’s Gain Valuable Lessons From UN WCAR**

**Durban, South Africa, September 7, 2001** A group of Canadian NGOs attending the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) have issued a joint statement today expressing solidarity in their fight against racism in all its forms and stating some of the lessons learned from all the difficulties that were experienced at the WCAR these last few weeks in South Africa.

The Canadian NGO representatives were of different ethnic, racial, linguistic, social and religious backgrounds from across Canada, indicative of the rich diversity of Canadian society.

Despite that our expectations regarding the WCAR process were not fully satisfied, the NGOs have learned much about the different problems and realities which are faced by peoples from the four corners of the earth. As a result of our shared discussions and dialogue, we have become more sensitized to the causes and plights of other communities, regardless of the distances between their country of origin and Canada or even within Canada itself.

The Canadian NGOs leave this conference with a more global and inclusive vision of equality, and with new tools of education and understanding in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
NGOs are much more prepared to deal with issues at home because of increased understanding and exchange of ideas and experiences at WCAR. We have exchanged ideas and shared information with hundreds of NGOs from across the globe who are involved in similar struggles.

Among the many lessons that were learned by the Canadian NGOs from their experience in South Africa, perhaps the most important one was the need to be united in fighting all forms of intolerance and discrimination. We must give fair and equal treatment to the voices of all peoples representing civil society in Canada.

Confronted with very hard and complex issues of discrimination from around the world, and working under extremely trying circumstances, Canadian NGOs have emerged from the WCAR united and reconfirming their shared commitment to fighting racism in all its forms abroad and back home in Canada.

Stated one representative, “Canada is a multi-colored maple tree whose branches are large enough to provide shelter for all peoples regardless of their race, religion, nationality, language, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social status, or cultural origin. It is the multicultural diversity of its people that add to the strength and beauty of Canada.”

The UN WCAR was convened to provide an international forum to address pressing issues relating to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to set out a plan of action to address these issues. The international community decided on five themes to be discussed at the conference: the sources, causes, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism; victims; strategies to achieve full and effective equality, provision of effective remedies, recourse, redress and measures of prevention; and education aimed at the eradication of racism and racial discrimination.

Active Culture Against Racism
African Canadian Legal Clinic
Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies
Canadian Council for Refugees
Canadian Race Relations Foundation
Canadian Teachers’ Federation
Carrefour de liaison et d’Aide Multi-ethnique
Changing Together, a Centre for Immigrant Women
CONACOH
EGALE Canada
FCJ Hamilton House Refugee Project
Hellenic Canadian Congress
National Association of Japanese Canadians
National Association of Women and Law
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
PEI Multicultural Council
Race Relations in Canada Post 9/11
*Perspectives 2002 - by Karen Mock*

Having assumed the position of Executive Director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in October, 2001, this is actually my first message in *Perspectives*, and it gives me the opportunity to reflect on a very exciting, challenging and rewarding first few months in office. I “hit the ground running” as they say, as the work of the Foundation, and my work in particular, was very much influenced by the aftermath of both the World Conference Against Racism and the horrific events of September 11th.

Our *Appeal for Ongoing Vigilance over Racial and Religious Intolerance following Sept. 11th*, distributed in October and featured in our last issue of *Perspectives*, resonated with Canadians across the country. The “Terrorists Come in All Colours” mini-poster and related stickers were a huge success. These resources are being used by school boards, counselling services, police, government officials, and all those seeking guidance on how to allay fears and educate their clientele in a pro-active way to stop or avoid the backlash against Muslims and Arab Canadians, and the scapegoating of Jews, immigrants and refugees. I am pleased to report that with the generous support of Joss Maclennan Design and the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, we have printed and distributed 60,000 mini-posters, 120,000 stickers, and numerous *Appeals* and the orders are still coming in. The *Vigilance* campaign speaks to the importance of sending out positive messages and providing concrete resources in the fight against racism.

The police and community statistics for 2001 on hate/bias crime and racist incidents showed a dramatic increase in September, October and November, tapering off in December, with the majority of incidents this year against religious minorities. Clearly there is much work to be done across Canada, when racism is so close to the surface. On the one hand, people can now more readily identify with the victims of terrorism. On the other hand, measures to increase security must not violate our hard won human and civil rights. The CRRF is committed to continuing to raise awareness of racism in Canada, and to providing tools to assist in the struggle against it.

The shadow cast by the World Conference Against Racism also greatly impacted on the work of the Foundation in the past few months. This brief message is not the place for me to recount my own experiences in and reflections on Durban. I have done that in more than 30 presentations since my return, including the keynote address I was honoured to give at the Harmony Awards Dinner in November (see [www.crr.ca](http://www.crr.ca) for the complete text). What is important now is that we take the lessons we learned in Durban, both negative and positive, and move forward to strengthen the domestic agenda against racism and hate in this country.

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation took an outstanding position paper to Durban, based on extensive research and consultation, and we have made post-WCAR initiatives a priority in the coming year…not a rehashing of what happened, but how to make the most of the lessons learned, and what the implications are for all of us in this country -- NGOs and governments alike. To that end, we have held two community forums – one
in Regina in October, and one in Moncton in March, in conjunction with our board meetings – to examine the local implications of the WCAR process and the resulting Declaration and Program of Action. We have participated in numerous panels and deb briefings sponsored by various other organizations, and will continue to do so, hopefully culminating in our bringing together all the key Canadian stakeholders and partners in the WCAR process in the fall of this year, to move the agenda forward. We are pleased to offer this issue of Perspectives to do just that – to move the agenda forward, based on the experiences we have had together.

As the pages in this newsletter will show, we need to learn more about each other’s issues and perspectives. We ourselves need to do more of what we in anti-racism work have always said our work is about – putting yourself in the other’s shoes. And we need to do that together – to heal, to regroup, and to regain the solidarity needed to strengthen the anti-racism movement in Canada. Some of that began in Durban, when several of the Canadian NGOs realized that the UN process into which we were thrown -- of caucuses and divisiveness -- was not the approach that afforded us the time or place to learn what we needed to about all the issues to unite against racism, in all its forms. To that end, I believe the most important NGO document to emerge from Durban was the joint declaration of those Canadian NGOs who began the healing process, the text of which you can find on Page __ of this newsletter and on our website. We invite all NGOs of like mind (whether you were in Durban or not) to join us by adding your group to this declaration (contact me at kmock@crr.ca to add your name), as we implement the best of WCAR, rectify the worst, and put the worst behind us -- so that we move forward, hopefully stronger for the experience and united against racism.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my Chair, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander, the members of the Board, the Staff of the CRRF and the various officials in Canadian Heritage for their warm welcome and support they have shown me in my first few months of office. Thank you also to the many community members for their positive feedback and encouragement. I look forward to many more years of working together in this important organization to further such very important work in which we are all involved.

Focus on antiracism networking and coalition building

Perspectives 2003 - by Karen Mock

Unlike most recent issues of the CRRF newsletter that focus on a specific topic, we decided to use this issue to update our readers on some of the many activities and initiatives of the foundation over the past several months. However, as you read about our Edmonton symposium as a follow-up world conference against racism, as you consider the summits and other interventions on racial profiling, as you review the projects supported by the initiatives against racism grants, and as you enjoy the articles on aboriginal education, the award of excellence gala and symposium and the terrific work being done by the youth to develop a national network, you will see that these various events and activities indeed do have a
common focus. They all owe a great part of their success to the impact of antiracism networking and coalition building.

The success of most of our projects is due to the fact that they bring people together, often from across the country, from many different backgrounds and with many different interests and constituencies. But they are people with a common focus on anti-racism, equity and social justice. It may sound like a hackneyed overused expression from an earlier era, but there is no underestimating the fact that “together we’re better!”

From the time that the CRRF opened its doors in 1997 with part of its mission to build a national framework for the struggle against racism in Canada, there has been a commitment to community consultation, and to the creation and strengthening of partnerships and coalitions. Our Board of Directors, the Research Advisory Panel and the Aboriginal Issues Advisory Committee ensure regional input in strategic direction and decision making. Public forums on topical issues across the country raise awareness of antiracism issues relevant to the local contexts -- from Moncton and Charlottetown to Edmonton and Vancouver. And in recent years, volunteer advisory committees ensure an eclectic and inclusive approach to planning and implementation of our national conferences and symposia.

There is no question that not everyone can (or should) be at the same table at the same time, and that what is important is to be strategic if our common goal is to effect systemic and lasting change in the direction of antiracism and equity. And there is also no question that disparate groups and individuals may not always see eye to eye on all issues. Indeed, on some issues we may even be diametrically opposed. One of the greatest challenges of coalition building is to be able to put some of these differences aside in order to come together in strength and solidarity to reach common goals. That process is sometimes even painful. As bell hooks was quoted in *Yours in Struggle*: “…if it doesn’t hurt, it ain’t no coalition building!”

Coalitions, by their nature, can and should be issues based, when people come together for a purpose on an ad hoc basis, achieve their goals and then continue on their separate ways until the next issue and possibly a new configuration of groups. In this way, coalitions and networks are similar. The autonomy of the individual participants or group is respected, with concurrent regard for the common interest of the whole. The CRRF is encouraged by the response of many antiracism groups to our outreach across the country, but we are especially pleased to be working with youth leadership to facilitate the creation of a national youth network, that will both respect their autonomy while strengthening and empowering the youth voice for antiracism in Canada.

*The Networking Book: People Connecting with People*, defines a network as “…a web of free-standing participants cohering through shared values and interests” and networking as “…people connecting with people (individuals or groups), linking ideas and resources.” Participants are independent and self-sufficient, yet link to something larger – the network itself -- with a common value or ideology the conceptual glue that holds it together. In our case and in the case of our community partners, it is a basic belief in antiracism, human rights and equity that binds and strengthens us.
As you will read in this issue of Perspectives, the CRRF is committed to community consultation, networking and coalition building in order to facilitate dialogue, access and systemic change, whether the issue is racial profiling, redress, Aboriginal rights, or equity in education and employment. At the same time, where appropriate to advance the antiracism agenda, it is essential to create partnerships and strategic alliances with the public and private sector agencies that are willing to work with us to achieve our goals, not just for equality seeking groups but for all Canadians.

**Putting antiracism back on the agenda**

*Perspectives 2004 - by Karen Mock*

In the spring of this year, members of the federal government, including the Prime Minister, promised to introduce a national action plan against racism. Regrettably, an election call delayed that announcement.

The requirement of member states to produce a national action plan was one of the outcomes of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban. It was the subject of a CRRF-sponsored conference one year later in Edmonton (October 2002), entitled *Strengthening the Agenda Against Racism in Canada*, in which delegates from across the country provided many recommendations for action that served as a catalyst for the government to develop a draft of the promised action plan.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism and Racial Discrimination, Doudou Diène, visited Canada in September 2003 and met with government and community representatives, facilitated by the CRRF. He filed his report to the UN in March of this year, outlining a number of areas in which Canada needs to act in order to show that we are committed to the struggle against racism.

Not long after M. Diène’s report was tabled, there was a frightening spate of racist and antisemitic acts. It was during this period that then Minister of State for Multiculturalism Jean Augustine, Justice Minister Irwin Cotler and Prime Minister Paul Martin promised the national action plan to combat racism and hate. The Speech from the Throne in October 2004 specified that the Government “will strengthen Canada’s ability to combat racism, hate speech and hate crimes, at home and around the world,…. does not tolerate racism and hate crimes, and will use whatever means necessary to ensure the safety and dignity of all Canadians.”

The Foundation is determined to make sure that the domestic action plan against racism not only gets back on the agenda, but that it is placed high on that agenda. While it is important to support multiculturalism and diversity and especially the effective implementation of so-called diversity polices in all areas -- especially in education and in the workplace – these are not, and should not be considered, replacements for fighting racism in all its forms. Multiculturalism and diversity programs must include antiracism initiatives. We are pleased the present Minister of State for Multiculturalism, Raymond...
Chan, has committed to moving the agenda forward. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation will continue to work with all those who are committed to putting antiracism back on the agenda.

Budget numbers – what are they worth?

_Perspectives 2005 - by Karen Mock_

The federal budget just announced contains some interesting numbers, and anti-racism activists across the country are wondering what they mean. The government has set aside $56 million over the next five years for the implementation of a national **action plan against racism**. There will also be $25 million allocated over the next three years “for commemorative and educational initiatives to highlight the contribution that ethnocultural groups have made to Canadian society…”

The idea that UN member states create a national action plan against racism was a requirement of the Declaration and Programme of Action from the United Nations World Conference Against Racism held in Durban South Africa in 2001. Canada signed on and, after four years, is about to roll out the initial stages of that plan. But what do the budget numbers mean? Given that the Foundation was established by the federal government, in partnership with the Japanese Canadian community, as an organization to help lead the fight against racism in Canada, we, along with many other civil society organizations are eager to find out how that $56 million will be spent, and what role the CRRF can or should play in the implementation of the plan. To date we have had no word.

We are also trying to decipher the meaning of $25 million over three years for “commemorative and educational initiatives”. As an organization that came into being as a result of the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement, we are in touch with a number of communities which have been wronged historically, and which have been attempting to negotiate for years with the Canadian government for racist wrongs to be redressed. Their access to the negotiating table has been varied and inconsistent, with some communities well on their way to a mutually agreeable settlement, while others cannot get through the door to start the conversation. How far will $25 million go to address and resolve such a variety of concerns and to provide appropriate redress/compensation/reparation for past injustices?

Of course budget numbers are not just picked out of a hat. Ideas are put down on paper and estimates are arrived at, based on what needs to be accomplished. More than 5 years ago, in the NGO Position Paper that the CRRF took to Durban, we laid out those needs after consultations with Canadians. And a year after Durban, we convened major stakeholder groups in Edmonton, including youth, to provide a catalyst for the creation of a Canadian action plan. In 2003 we facilitated the Canadian visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, whose report highlighted the frustrations felt by civil society that we still had no plan of action, though the needs were great.
Now, just one year before Durban Plus Five, we are eagerly waiting to see what the numbers reflect, and we anticipate some significant announcements in this regard from Minister Raymond Chan. We then look forward to strengthening our community and institutional partnerships and cooperation, where each department and organization contributes their skills and expertise appropriately, rather than competing with one another, to ensure effective implementation of significant initiatives to counter and prevent racism in all sectors of Canadian society. If we don’t, the numbers won’t be worth the paper they’re written on.