
FULL HALIFAX DECLARATION TEXT

1: RECOGNITION

Canadians of African descent will always be displaced, replaced, and erased without the recognition of our history and presence from the foundations of this country to the present day.

The destruction of the historic communities of Africville, Hogan's Alley and Little Burgundy, the coerced loss of land title in North Preston, ongoing gentrification in the city after city, environmental racism, the tout-migration from rural communities due to generations of being denied resources, or simply being priced out and unable to purchase a home—Canadians of African descent experience ongoing displacement.

Demands

1. The Government of Canada to enact and promulgate legislation that recognizes people of African descent as a distinct group who have made and continue to make profound economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual contributions to Canadian history, identity and society, recognized through legislative key events like Black History Month and Emancipation Day.
2. Enslavement to be recognized as a colonial crime against humanity and efforts must be made at all levels of government to preserve historical sites and promote education around the history of enslavement in Canada. Slavery is a cornerstone of Canadian colonialism. Recognizing the realities of slavery and its impacts is also a practice of decolonization.
3. Every level of government to construct fitting memorials to Black people in Canada, Black women and men, Black youth, Black people with disabilities, and Black LGBTQ2S+ people, as one way of recognizing the presence and contributions of people of African descent and declare in each province Sites of Memory which invoke the Black experience more collectively and actively address anti-Black racism in its decolonial commitments.
4. A national anti-Black racism strategy must be created to raise awareness about the roots of systemic anti-Black racism in this country, with clear actions for combatting anti-Black discrimination and hate throughout society.
5. Data to be gathered in all areas to understand the scope of Black life in Canada, and dedicated grants and research programs created and increased. All research and data must be gathered in an ethical process determined collaboratively with Black communities.

2. MEDIA AND THE ARTS

People cannot be a people without our stories. For too long, Black people have been defined by others, our stories written without us, subjected to stereotyping and misrepresentation.

Demands

1. Investment in Black-owned and run media of all forms, including those run by youth.
2. All major broadcasters to collaborate with local Black communities to develop a statement of ethics around reporting on Black communities and to ensure diverse representation throughout their newsrooms.
3. As many more productions discover Black stories and film in Black communities, just and fair compensation and benefits must come to those whose stories are being told. Production companies must commit to hiring local Black labour, using Black businesses and investing in the communities in which they film and/or record.
4. Artistic organizations to work with Black communities to represent our lives and stories on stage including hiring Black people at all levels of production and throughout organizations. Too often, Black artistry and creative productions have been extracted, exploited, or appropriated without recognition or compensation.
5. Museums, archives, libraries, and other collections to work with local Black communities to respectfully preserve, protect our histories, and to develop ethical policies in concert with African Canadians for the treatment of artifacts, photos, or other archival materials, including returning objects, copyrights or other materials if that is the will of the community.
6. Government of Canada to endorse the UNESCO General History of Africa, its pedagogical content including curriculum outlines, teacher's guides, textbooks, films, radio programs, and illustrated books.
7. Parliament of Canada to implement a Cultural Bill of Rights, recognizing the value of Black arts, heritage, and narratives to Canada and creating ethical frameworks around our artistic contributions. And to make sure this includes a diverse, diasporic, and intersectional recognition of Black life.

3. JUSTICE

The history of Black people in the Americas and across the globe is one marked by violence. From the time of enslavement, and throughout colonial regimes, Black people have been contained, disciplined, controlled and criminalized. Our call for justice grows ever louder. There can be no liberation while Black people continue to face unjust imprisonment and policing. As Sankofa teaches us, to move forward, we must also look back. Justice begins with apology and reparation.

The criminal justice system in Canada continues to fail Black people living in Canada. Our communities are consistently surveilled, and our people are frequent victims of criminalization, as well as violence. The Canadian justice system is rooted in racism, classism, colonialism, and white

supremacy. The system's current policies, procedures, and structure continue to perpetuate violence and discrimination against our communities.

Demands

1. The Government of Canada to adopt a national reparations framework and strategy to study and produce recommendations on reparations related to enslavement of Indigenous people and people of African descent in pre-Confederation Canada, as well as the historical injustices resulting from the enslavement in pre- and post-Confederation Canada. The impacts of the afterlife of slavery on Black people in Canada must be addressed.
2. Disinvestment in punishment and an investment in community safety, from housing to employment to treatment and mental health care that addresses the social causes of crime.
3. Anti-Black racism, hate crimes and discrimination must be treated meaningfully and seriously by the justice system, within unions and workplaces, and particularly within the federal public service. Among other mechanisms, human rights tribunals must offer timely solutions that are accountable to communities.
4. Reparative measures such as race and culture assessments must be introduced at every site and in all areas of the justice system. Community placements, alternative sentencing measures, and prevention and intervention initiatives must be invested in rather than criminalization and punishment.
5. Police found to engage in racial profiling, brutality and harm against our communities must not be tolerated, and therefore dismissed from employment. Police oversight bodies, police governance, complaints, review committees and other accountability structures must at minimum provide independent investigations that are accountable to Black communities and provide real penalties, as well as deterrence measures.
6. We recognize that the immigration and deportation system makes the movement of Black labour illegal and those seeking a better life. We call for an end to the “double punishment” system faced by those entangled both by the criminal justice system and deportation regimes. Those Canadians who did not obtain citizenship as children should be offered amnesty, particularly former children without citizenship in the child welfare system, recognizing that Canada should not treat the Global South as a ‘dumping ground’ for those raised within these borders. We join the calls for oversight of Canada Border Services Agency. We also call for meaningful paths to citizenship for refugees, migrants, temporary workers as well as other immigrants, and supports for settlement for individuals of African descent to live full lives in Canada.

4. GENDER AND LGBTQ2S+ JUSTICE

Black women, men and LGBTQ2S+ live at the intersection of racial and gender and sexual discrimination. All policies addressing anti-Black racism must consider a gender lens that recognizes the specific exclusions and challenges affecting women and gender/sexually diverse people of African descent.

Demands

1. Meaningful social and justice policies addressing gendered violence, domestic violence, and hate crimes against LGBTQ2S+ people of African descent in Canada. Black queer and trans youth suffer from high rates of violence, homelessness, criminalization, and stigma. All policies including justice, education, economic development, healthcare and housing must be assessed for equity and access to people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.
2. Canadian government to remove additional barriers of name changes for Black trans and gender non-conforming people who do not have access to their birth documents due to fleeing homes, arriving in Canada as refugees, or loss of access due to family dynamics.
3. Canadian government to make a meaningful investment in programs across the globe for women, queer, and trans people. We call for paths to citizenship for the many Black migrant women responsible for domestic and childcare work, and for an end to the exploitation of these workers.
4. Investment in free daycare and for a social assistance system that does not criminalize and surveil Black women but works to support and uplift those in need of assistance.
5. Those involved in family court must be provided with representation, and we call for an expansion of Legal Aid into areas of employment and family law that particularly affect Black women.

5. EDUCATION

Black students of all ages and in all stages of life have a right to education, to develop knowledge and skills, and to have their intellectual contributions recognized.

Demands

1. Implement Black Canadian Studies in all school curricula to raise awareness and educate students on the contributions made by people of African descent in Canada and around the globe. This teaching must include Afrocentric histories, ways of knowing and knowledge within the histories and stories of Indigenous peoples and recognize the similarities and differences of colonialism in our communities.
2. Investments in early literacy programs for Black children, and for anti-racism and culturally responsive programs that particularly address the learning needs of Black boys, Black youth with disabilities, and Black LGBTQ2S+ youth. We also call for schools to invest in active learning beyond the classroom, involving community elders and members of the community, collaborating with arts organizations, and recognizing the many ways Black children learn in a decolonizing environment.
3. Educational institutions must provide supports that lead to student success including guidance counsellors, dedicated space, and mental health supports that are culturally relevant to students of African descent, including anti-racist, non-ableist, culturally responsive space for students with disabilities.

4. Government to invest in the education and training of Black youth, and in support for young families. Higher education must be affordable and available to all who wish to access it. Sports, arts, and other enrichments must be available to youth of all social classes and backgrounds. Black youth need paths to gain sustainable employment, home ownership, and a future without environmental destruction.
5. Governments must provide funding of post-secondary programs in diasporic, intersectional Black studies programs in all disciplines, including sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine. Professional academic programs require the support of governments to increase the commitments to Black scholarships and research in the sciences. Not only must there be equitable admission of qualified Black students, but there must be increased systems of support to ensure that students complete the programs.
6. Student loan forgiveness programs to lessen the debt burden for young Black people that delays the ability to invest in housing or create savings.
7. Teachers must be given training in anti-racist and decolonial teaching methods, provided access to ongoing professional development that addresses anti-Blackness and held accountable if they refuse or defy this training.
8. Governments, universities, colleges, trades, and training programs must provide financial supports that allow access for Black students of all backgrounds. All educational and training programs must review their admission policies and create supports and new policies to ensure Black people are entering and graduating from these programs.
9. Government research grants must be dedicated to research and data collection by Black scholars, communities, and organizations. Currently the tri-council does not identify Black researchers or Black Studies as a dedicated area of research for funding. The government's commitment to decolonization must also be extended to correcting the colonial violence perpetrated against Black people and people of African descent. Black scholars and researchers must have access to specific dedicated funding if these barriers are to be addressed appropriately and effectively. We insist the Government of Canada creates dedicated funding for Black scholars and Black research (lead by Black researchers and in partnership with Black communities) within the Tri-Council.
10. An end to criminalizing our children in schools. All schools must review their discipline policies and reduce or eliminate reliance on suspension or other punitive forms of discipline that disproportionately target Black students and remove them from education. Schools should install restorative justice policies in conjunction with Black communities and families that operate through an anti-racist lens.

6. HEALTHCARE

The first medical school in Canada opened in 1824, before the end of slavery in this region we call Canada. The legacy of anti-Black racism in medicine, science, and healthcare is deep and broad. From histories of scientific racism (race biology) that categorized African people as less than human and more animalistic, to anthropological exhibitions of Black bodies both dead and alive in museums and fairs, to medical and scientific experimentation on enslaved women and men

including the practice of race-based medicine that argues that Black people have dulled nerve endings and therefore cannot feel pain acutely as white people. The legacies of slavery and anti-Black racism continues to dehumanize, and degrade Black people's experiences in healthcare today. Healthcare in Canada remains impacted by the afterlife of slavery. Black people have a fundamental human right to the dignity and autonomy of our bodies. This includes the right to access care for all aspects of our being—physical, mental emotional, and spiritual—at all stages of our lives.

Black people must have access to primary care partitioners and specialists who reflect them and/or who are specifically trained on the impacts anti-Black racism has on Black life. Anti-Black racism has physiological impacts on our health—making it more difficult to heal from injuries and surgeries, metabolizes medication differently, and contributes to chronic illness.

Demands

1. Medical education across the country to focus specifically on Black healthcare through the four-year medical program. We call on the government of Canada to work with the Association of Faculties of Medicine and the Medical Council of Canada, to update and redesign medical education curriculum to focus specifically on anti-Black racism and Black health to produce more responsive and better trained physicians in Canada.
2. Government of Canada to work with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada to ensure physicians stay up to date on the impacts anti-Black racism has on Black patients, and to build into their continuing professional development specific training on anti-Black racism and Black health.
3. Government of Canada to urge all faculties of medicine across Canada to ensure that Black students are not only admitted into medical school (by removing systemic anti-Black discriminatory barriers), but also that specific programs be created to support retention of Black medical students.
4. Government of Canada must call for the end of the practice of race-based medicine. Race-based medicine has resulted in Black people not having access to critical care (i.e., kidney transplants and blood donation). We demand the government of Canada publicly apologize for the decades long anti-Black (homophobia/transphobia) racism donor policy that has resulted in less Black people donating blood and registering as organ donors.
5. Ensure reproductive freedom for all Black people to not have children or have as many children as they wish. Black people who can get pregnant must have access to healthcare, healthy food, and pre- and post-natal support. This includes ensuring Black children grow up with adequate food, clean water, and safe shelter, and that Black parents can provide the necessities of life. No child should grow up in poverty in one of the richest countries in the world.
6. Appropriate healthcare is needed for Black people with disabilities and Black LGBTQ2S+ people. This includes greater acknowledgement of self-determination, but also intersectional anti-racist care. Black trans and gender non-conforming people who are seeking gender affirming care, must have access to primary care physicians and specialists who are familiar with how anti-Black racism intersects with transphobia to negatively impact the health and well-being

of Black people. They must also be familiar with operating on a diversity of skin to ensure that we are not overly scarred. Anti-Black homophobia often results in Black lesbians not being given timely pap tests or the assumption that the only healthcare Black gay men need is the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

7. The increase of HIV/AIDS in Black communities is happening among heterosexual Black women, and this is due to anti-Black racism and the lack of healthcare resources in Black communities (lack of testing and services).
8. Adequate supports for Black people living with disabilities, experiencing mental health struggles, and for seniors. All Canadians have the right to accessible buildings, jobs that accommodate disability, education that does not discriminate against those with different abilities, and social assistance that allows those who cannot work or are retired to live with dignity. Social assistance must be adequate to cover medication, transportation, home care, and all other necessities of life.
9. Black people have the right to anti-racist responsive care, and treatment for physical and mental health. All healthcare practitioners must be trained in anti-racist and decolonial care, and providers who are found to exhibit anti-Black racism, and discrimination must ~~not~~ be removed from practice immediately.
10. Government to adequately fund healthcare in all areas—from long-term care homes to rural health clinics, from care workers to nurses to medical staff, and from hospitals to psychiatric facilities. We recognize many Black people, particularly women (cis and trans), Black LGBTQ2S+ people, Black people with disabilities, and migrants have vulnerable jobs and low wage. We call for fair living wages for all who work in healthcare, and an equitably funded system across this country for all who access care.
11. Black people have the right to live in communities free from environmental racism, pollution, and waste that depletes our communities gives us cancer and other diseases and shortens our life span. Corporations responsible for harming the environment must make reparation to communities, and the Canadian government must enforce laws that hold corporations accountable to clean and repair our water, land, and surroundings. We call for governments to recognize and map food deserts and to ensure people, especially those in rural regions and in the North, can access affordable and nutritious food.
12. Investments in Black farming and food production, urban gardens, and community initiatives that seek to create space for food, recreation, sports, walking trails, and safe transit, so that Black people can live in safe and healthy communities that sustain us.

7. DEVELOPMENT

From the forced labour of enslaved African peoples to domestic and day labourers and migrant farmers—Black workers have been exploited in the colonial creation of Canada and have also given untold benefits while receiving little in return. Too many Black youth from small and rural communities must leave their homes to seek opportunities (for work and education), while Black seniors who gave their labour live and die in poverty without basic security.

We recognize economic development cannot take place without concurrent broader social development in all areas of Black life in Canada. Economic development begins with the right to live self-determined lives, to own the products of our labour, and to live safely and freely.

Both public and private entities must implement pathways for Black people in Canada to fully participate in economic and entrepreneurial initiatives. This includes initiatives to support Black-owned businesses, recognizing the many forms that Black entrepreneurship takes.

Demands

1. Financial institutions to recognize the history of discrimination in loans, mortgages and financial lending that has disadvantaged Black people and prevented us from acquiring inter-generational wealth. We call for financial reparation through investment in our communities, and equitable programs that provide paths for home and business ownership. We call for a decolonized and gender-responsive lens that recognizes that Black working-class people, women, LGBTQ2S+ people, and Black people with disabilities face disproportionate barriers to loans, grants, and other supports.
2. Canadian governments and corporations to invest in development around the globe, recognizing the debt owed to people and workers of African descent across the globe. There can be no ethical economic development for Canadians of African descent if it is built off the backs of our exploited cousins in the (over-exploited) “developing” world. We call for an anti-racist ethical framework that provides avenues for justice for those harmed by Canadian corporations, and that respects the environment and sovereignty of Black, African, racialized, and Indigenous people across the world.
3. All levels of government must create and implement a Foreign Qualification Recognition Plan to assist immigrants and newcomers and allow them to continue to work in areas of the labour market in which they have already acquired the schooling, skills, and experience for in another country.
4. Investment in African and Caribbean countries. Canada benefited and continues to benefit directly and indirectly from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, slavery and the exploitation of the resources located in predominantly Black countries. Canada must help end the global inequality between predominantly Black countries and the rest of the world. Canada should lead the charge for the global redistribution of wealth and resources, championing the UN Sustainable Development Goals, so Black people worldwide can live with dignity and respect.

8. SENIORS

Respect and honour for our elders is deeply engrained in our diverse and diasporic cultural traditions and in our family and community life. We pay tribute to our elders on whose shoulders we stand, and whose struggle makes it possible for us to be here today. Our forebears, both dead and living, experienced severe and overt forms of anti-Black racism, including the process of enslavement, and refusal to accept our ancestors who arrived through the underground railroad.

These were ancestors who then left, either returning to the United States or leaving for Sierra Leone, continued denial of employment, outside of the railways, construction sites or as domestic labour, and reluctance to provide accreditation to Black physicians wishing to provide services. Today, our seniors are still suffering the current-day exploitation of land titles, and theft of land and homes.

Black elders are disproportionately likely to live in poverty, have even greater limited access to primary care providers, and suffer greater food and housing security.

Demands

1. Government to address the exclusion of Black elders from society and to create policies that ensure our elders live in dignity including access to healthcare, support for long-term care facilities or home care, adequate pensions, and funding Black organizations committed to the well-being of seniors.

9. HOUSING

Access to quality jobs, housing, and educational opportunities are essential to social mobility and a good quality of life. Coordinated efforts are needed to break down long-standing barriers to safe, affordable, and suitable housing. There need to be targeted financial support for Black people seeking to enter the housing market.

Demands

1. Municipal and provincial governments to recognize the historic contributions and presence of Black neighbourhoods across the country and to pass policies that preserve these neighbourhoods against displacement. Historic properties and neighborhoods related to Black history must be preserved, reimaged, developed and recognized in co-creation with Black communities.
2. Governments at all levels must invest in affordable housing, including pathways to home ownership, development of housing co-ops, community land trusts, and rent control and protection from renoviction for Black tenants. Black tenants must be able to access legal support in disputes with landlords, recognizing the racist histories of eviction and displacement.
3. A moratorium must be placed on the evictions of unhoused people from parks and other temporary places of shelter. Governments at all levels must invest in clean, dignified, and stable housing for all; temporary solutions such as shelters must be truly temporary and adequately funded and accessible.
4. Culturally enriched housing must be available for seniors and people with disabilities, along with adequate support such as home care or supported living that ensures dignity for our elders.

5. Immigrants and refugees of African descent must be provided with adequate support to find housing.
6. The policing and surveillance of Black neighbourhoods and buildings must end. Low-income Black neighbourhoods experience disproportionate policing, profiling, and surveillance leading to increased stigma, harassment, and criminalization. Governments should invest in safe housing rather than in criminalization and punishment.

10. SPORTS/ATHLETICS

For too long Black people in sports and athletics offer their bodies as entertainment, as a spectacle for the amusement of others with no power—always at the mercy of others making decisions about their participation, involvement, and advancement. Therefore, we call on all sports bodies to dismantle anti-Black racist policies and practices which have affected the lives of many Black athletes, coaches, and managers.

There must be strategic efforts to increase Black representation in senior management, and administrative governance positions in amateur and professional sports, and athletic organizations.

Practices of institutional anti-Black racism have disproportionately impacted Black people which creates limited access to—and involvement in—the elite tiers of participation at the decision-making levels.

Demands

1. A more progressive and anti-racist inclusionary vision that develops and delivers a sector-standard program of anti-Black racism. Training should specifically target senior administrators, directors, and executive committee members at amateur and professional levels. This program will also include accountability standards with the possibility of censure and dismissal. And as well, it is imperative that economic barriers to participation be removed. It is necessary to improve efforts to recruit and retain Black people as coaches, administrators, and staff.

11. DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY

Without Black political engagement at all levels—from local to national, and from boards to Parliament—people of African descent will remain disempowered in Canada. Democratic engagement does not end with voting. Black people must be involved in the development of policy, oversight, and governance in all facets of society including school and police boards, municipal, provincial and federal government, corporate and charity boards, university governance and all other areas.

Demands

1. Government of Canada to enact and promulgate legislation establishing a department of the Government of Canada called the Department of African Canadian Affairs over which the Minister of African Canadian Affairs appointed by the commission under the Great Seal shall preside to conduct research and develop policies and programs to address issues facing people of African descent in Canada.
 2. Governments and policy leaders at all levels to include youth of African descent as full collaborative partners in developing youth-led policies that respond to the specific needs of youth in Black communities across Canada.
 3. Government-funded and research institutions to create a set of indicators measuring the impact of public policies for people of African descent.
 4. Government-funded and research institutions to collect data on the human rights situation of Black/African Canadians. Indicators such as poverty, employment, health, education, manifestations of discrimination and cultural identity should also be collected and regularly updated in a database. A geo-ethnic map of the distribution of Black /African Canadians must be created.
 5. Governments and institutions to ensure accessible research on the impacts of systematic racism on the well-being and quality of life of Black people in Canada. This work is necessary to remedy the inequalities present in our social systems and society at large.
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