

Defining Diversity

Diversity is commonly understood in terms of dimensions that include but are not limited to race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, Aboriginal status, skin colour, citizenship, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, creed, language, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience. (Source: Ontario Healthy Communities).

Have a comment, question or story idea?

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Bridging Diversity Committee

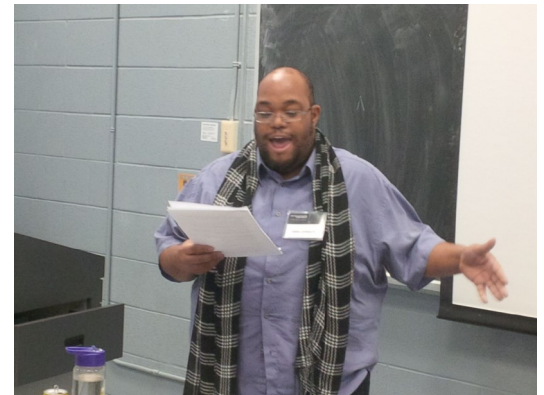
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“Being My Whole Self”: Advocates Mark Black History Month

By Emily Mooney, Master of Social Work Placement Student

During Black History Month, I was fortunate to attend the “Being My Whole Self” panel at the **Anti-Black Racism Conference** on February 19, 2016 at Ryerson University. The panel members, three Black members of the LGBTQ community who have been labeled with intellectual disability, discussed issues of identity and community, and safety, inclusion, and belonging.

The panel was moderated by King, a community organizer and group facilitator from Supporting Our Youth. The three panelists, all members of sprOUT Toronto, were Eddie Lindsay, Jr., Sonia Lowton, and Romeo Dontae Tresean Biggz Pierre. Eddie is studying community and social services at George Brown College, and he volunteers with sprOUT. Having a learning disability, ADHD, and a physical disability has made him want to promote a conversation about how people past the age cut-off for “youth” programs still need access to support services. Sonia is a committed self-advocate with an invisible disability, working to increase awareness of the impact of racism, ableism, and homophobia on people who receive services. You may be familiar with Romeo and his work: he is a multidisciplinary artist, musician, and performer who uses his art to explore his experiences of growing up with an intellectual disability and being a trans man.



Eddie sharing a spoken word poem he wrote for Black History Month

A common theme in King’s introduction and among all the panelists was the experience of being marginalized in multiple ways at once. Eddie opened the discussion with a powerful performance of his adaptation of the hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” often called the “Black American national anthem.” (Read the poem on p.4) Between lines of the hymn, Eddie rapped about the painful rejection he has felt from family, friends, and church. He feels that there are “four strikes” against him: “Black, I’m gay, I am a person with a disability, I am fat. I am!” Sonia talked about what it’s like to move through the world in a Black body with an invisible disability. She also spoke of feeling unsafe when she uses women’s washrooms, and described how upset she was once when some women chased her out of the “wrong” one. She was very grateful to Eddie for standing up to them.

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Religious, Cultural and Human Rights Observances

- March 8** ♦ International Women’s Day
- March 17** ♦ St. Patrick’s Day
- March 20** ♦ Spring Equinox, Palm Sunday
- March 21** ♦ Nowruz, New Year celebration in the Zoroastrian, Persian and Iranian communities
- March 21** ♦ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- March 23** ♦ Holi, Hindu festival of lights
- March 24** ♦ Purim , Jewish “Feast of Lots”
- March 25** ♦ Good Friday (Holy Friday in Eastern Christianity)
- March 27** ♦ Easter Sunday (Pascha in Eastern Christianity)
- April 10** ♦ National Volunteer Week begins
- April 14** ♦ Vaisakhi (Sikh, Hindu)
- April 23-30** ♦ Pesach/ Passover (Jewish)
- May 17** ♦ International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia
- May 21** ♦ Vesak (Buddha Day)
- May 23** ♦ Victoria Day
- June 5** ♦ Ramadan begins at sundown (Muslim)
- June 13** ♦ Shavuot (Jewish)
- June 21** ♦ National Aboriginal Day
- *Note: Jewish and Bahá’í observances begin at previous sundown

“Being My Whole Self” — continued...

Romeo showed his short film, “**Was Lost but Now I Am Found.**” This film’s themes are the isolation that Romeo has felt from being Black and trans, as well as the joy that comes to him from doing youth engagement work and teaching people about being LGBTQ. The film concludes, “You are not alone.”

The panelists also talked about communities where they feel safe and welcomed, mentioning sprOUT, the Griffin Centre, and the 519 Community Centre. They suggested that community spaces are more welcoming when the

people there are educated about LGBTQ issues, and when there are flyers and signs to show that the area is a positive space. Eddie mentioned that it is important not to assume what a person’s pronouns are, in case they are transgender. Romeo, Sonia, and Eddie all demonstrate powerful resilience and dignity in response to the multiple ways that they are marginalized. They and King all prepared an excellent workshop that brought light to what their lives are like. I am grateful for the opportunity to have heard them.

Disability and Settlement Roundtable Explores Inclusion of Newcomers with Disabilities

By Ilaneet Goren, Diversity Specialist

Conveying the importance of accessibility to funders, increasing collaboration and resource-sharing between community agencies, and advocating for more sustainable solutions were the key messages from the roundtable discussion on improving service accessibility for newcomers and refugees with disabilities. The event was held at the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf on February 26. Members of Community Living Toronto’s Bridging Diversity team participated in the discussion and assisted with the event’s planning and facilitation.

Organized by OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants) in partnership with Bob Rumball, Silent Voice and Springtide Resources, the half-day event was attended by over 30 frontline and management professionals including people with lived experiences of migration and settlement, people with disabilities and members of the deaf community. “The roundtable discussions are a space for service providers and

folks with lived experiences who seldom have opportunities to meet, network and share best practices to come together and learn from each other,” said Chavon Niles, the coordinator of OCASI’s award-winning Accessibility Initiative who has been leading the roundtables since 2013. “These discussions are important now more than ever as our understanding of disability continues to evolve because they allow us to better understand the complex and intersectional needs of service users as well as understand the challenges and opportunities of the funding environment.”

This year’s event stressed the importance of providing high-quality accessibility features that allow everyone to participate fully, such as ASL interpretation. Participants said that accessibility should be an integral part of any funding proposal, and that the settlement and disability sectors need to work more collaboratively to raise funders’ awareness of this need.

Women’s Organizations and Resources

ANNISAA, an organization promoting the wellbeing of Muslim women
647-761-0745
Annisaa.org
@ANNISAAORG

Canadian Women’s Foundation
416-365-1444
canadianwomen.org
@cdnwomenfdn

Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto
416-963-9963
nwrct.ca
@nwrct

Older Women’s Network
416-214-1518
olderwomensnetwork.org

Women’s Health in Women’s Hands 416-593-7655
whiwh.com
@WHIWHCHC

YWCA Canada
416-962-8881
ywcacanada.ca
@YWCA_Canada

YWCA Toronto
416-961-8100
ywcatoronto.org
@YWCAToronto

Participants shared examples of how their organizations have promoted inclusion of newcomers with disabilities through such activities as matching newcomers with mentors who help them integrate into the community, making the intake and assessment process more accessible and easier to navigate, and addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ newcomers and refugees.

Some front-line workers spoke about unexpected cross-cultural challenges such as working with a different understanding of “disability” as it is understood in Canada in contrast to the individuals’ cultural background. Some also noted that many newcomers with disabilities are not aware of their rights, or don’t know they have the right to request and receive accommodation.

The second half of the morning explored the challenges experienced in both sectors, with participants proposing both local and systemic solutions. Lack of resources enabling organizations to adequately meet the diverse accessibility needs of newcomers, refugees and people with precarious residency status who have a disability was mentioned as the main barrier. The group called for a more systemic approach that goes beyond the patchwork of short-term funded projects, while emphasizing the human rights aspect of the diversity and inclusion conversation.

Making services more inclusive and accessible for newcomers with disabilities is increasingly seen as a priority for the developmental services sector. Two years ago, Community Living Toronto and Developmental Services Toronto (dsto) received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to implement research, outreach and education projects aimed at improving our sector’s ability to serve immigrant communities. The settlement sector, funded largely by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has also taken steps to promote understanding of the needs of newcomers and refugees with disabilities. OCASI has done this through the development of specialized accessibility training which explores the unique challenges newcomers with disabilities experience.

Community Living Toronto has joined OCASI in facilitating three roundtables in Toronto, London and Ottawa in the winter of 2015. “The opportunity to collaborate with developmental service agencies has allowed OCASI to better educate our sector on the challenges and barriers individuals may experience when seeking support services in the community, and help settlement workers better support clients by learning what programs and services are available,” Chavon said.

Get More Resources!

1. Subscribe to **#BridgingDiversity e-Bulletin** by emailing ilaneet.goren@cltoronto.ca
2. Visit the **Bridging Diversity Toolkit** on ConnectAbility: ConnectAbility.ca/BridgingDiversity

Pictured: Layla Ibrahim from Community Living Toronto engaged in outreach at the OCASI Professional Development Conference in October 2015.





sprOUT Toronto

Peer group for LGBTQ people with an intellectual disability over the age of 18. Meets every second Monday of the month at the 519 Church St. Community Centre 6 - 8 pm

**Call to register:
416-222-1153 ext. 138**



Distribution Centre for Syrian refugees is seeking volunteers and donations

Our settlement partner, CultureLink, has been running a Refugee Distribution Centre to support refugee families sponsored by both the government and private sponsors. They are in need of volunteers and donations of household items. For a full list of items needed please visit:

www.culturelink.ca/refugee/donation-collection

Or call: 416-588-6288



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Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

Four Strikes *by Eddie*

*Lift every voice and sing
'Til Earth and Heaven ring*

Four strikes. Definition. Define. Who I am. I am, I am.

*Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea*

Four strikes. Black. I am gay. I am person with a disability. I am fat. I am all this and more. Four strikes.

*'Til Earth and Heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty*

Four strikes. I can't breathe, breath. I'm silent. I have no voice, no help for me, a part of me just want to die. I am disowned by my friends and family, my community, church don't allow a sinner of abomination like me on their property. So I'm faced knowing who God is for me on my own, whatever. Four strikes.

*Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea*

Four strikes, you are out. I am a laughing stock. Beaten and rejected, bruised and battered.

*Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us*

Four strikes, four strikes! Feel like God don't hear me. Who am I? I don't fit. Where's my rejoicing? I can't, I can't face tomorrow. Four strikes, am I out? Do you hear me, feel me, am I invisible?

*Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won
One, two, three, four strikes - you're out.*

Bridging Diversity Word Search

ACCESS

ALLY

DIVERSE

EQUITY

IDENTITY

INCLUDE

HUMAN RIGHTS

W	G	Y	N	H	U	M	A	N	R
Y	E	N	I	T	B	E	C	D	I
T	Q	L	N	E	F	S	C	G	G
I	U	H	C	A	J	R	E	K	H
T	I	J	L	O	P	E	S	Q	T
N	T	L	U	R	M	V	S	X	S
E	Y	W	D	T	U	I	C	B	O
D	A	J	E	W	K	D	N	T	Z
I	F	Y	M	K	E	B	D	G	F