



## Event Report

On May 27, 2018, the CRRF in partnership with the Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba conducted a focus group of 23 youth aged 18 - 35 to have them share their perspectives on issues of racism in Canada. Celebrating Asian Heritage with All: Our Youth, Our Tomorrow, also featured a keynote address from CRRF Board member Orlando Bowen.

This focus group was the second in a series of National Conversations focus groups aimed at surveying the perspectives of youth 18-35 on issues of racism. The insights gained from this event will be used to craft a report detailing youth perspectives of racism and race relations in Canada. Future focus group locations will be announced in the near future.

Following are some of the key points expressed by students prior to, during, and following the dialogue.

- I think awareness of racism-related Canadian history relies on the degree of active effort people put into finding that history. For those without a formal Canadian-school education, evidence of Canada's racist background is not apparent. I appreciate the public exhibits offered to make these dark sides of Canada's history accessible, for all to learn these truths from.
- I do not think my parents are aware. I believe the state of our current education system, including university is [not sufficient] nor does it give us the solid foundation of Canada's racism-related events in history. Also, I feel that in this decade, attending these group sessions is necessary to get the full picture [of contemporary racism in Canada].
- I went to high school in a "non-colored school" (i.e. most students were white), where my status as the "coloured" kid was obvious. From my experience, history classes there give you less than a weekday or two on "racism in Canada" related topics, not every other topic touched on such issues. I think we should have more than a day or two on these topics. I think the best time to prioritize adding those "taboo" topics to curriculum is now, because it would sooner allow future generations to be exposed to Canada's mistakes, which should not be repeated.
- I think Canada has a deceivingly "polite/respectful" foundation: unlike like Americans who broke away from British violently, Canada stayed, and "left" gracefully. British manners, recognition of the queen, etc. infamously stayed



with us, giving Canada a friendly image. It is also easy to talk positive about someone like John A. MacDonald. However, the minute I mention Indian Act, it is suddenly like “no please don’t talk about that, we’re not about that”.

- I think it can be difficult because we are not committed to reconciliation. I think we forget that when we start with forgiving we should start with responsibility. When I go to chapters for rotary club, talking about people who did good in the world, as soon as I mentioned Indian Act, people were taken aback. My group was of professionals, with influence and power. In addition, they did not want me to talk about this! So how will we change anything when the people with money and power did not want to give such topics any time in the spotlight?
- I believe we do not share power, and that power sits in the hands of only specific people. I think Canadians who do not want to acknowledge Canada’s wrongdoings in history lack humility, and require it to talk about these issues.
- Since we are under the veil of acceptance and multiculturalism, it is easy to remove ourselves from a bigoted and self-supremacy identity. I think it is different to talk about racism in a genuine way, lest we will hit the “white fragility nerve” (she likes this term). This is why when we say, “Some words are taboo”, anti-racism, anti-black? If [white] privileged people wanted
- things to change, I think many don’t want to be equal to their oppressors, it’s not in our mandate and we don’t have to be I think [people of color] should take a less apologetic approach and be more assertive.
- Canada has a picture of a perfect place. I feel the country is like a couple in a relationship. There will be bad times. We cannot ignore them. They help us become better. However, people are more worried about losing face, so we miss those opportunities to become better.
- Back in my home country, we have no freedom of speech. When I got [to Canada], I “had” freedom of speech, but when I start to express myself, I felt my words were discounted, because I am a minority. -> “sure you believe in opinion X, but who are you?” I have lived in Canada 5+ years, think I have been [in Canada] long enough for my opinions and viewpoints on what life is like here to matter!
- It boils down to the conversations that make people uncomfortable; getting past that uncomfortable moment. By allowing people to get past breaking their veil of what they think their country is like, they have a better chance of amending what they “know” to be true.



- I think as a manager of my workplace, it is easier to confront situations I think, are morally wrong. Facing it head-on is usually better than being passive and allowing wrong to happen. However, even though I am someone in power (manager of workplace), I am one of the already few colored people in my workplace. I can remark that I believe some of my subordinates do not respect me the same as other (white) managers, because of my ethnicity. So I think it is all the more important for me not to back down when I see discriminatory behavior happening towards other minorities, because I think the moment they believe I am passive against discrimination in the workplace, is when I will start to see it much more.
- In my youth group, we have a face-to-face conference every year; we talk about different issues we face. I think this is a safe method with valuable results. Sometimes we get the older generation to share, and give their perspectives into the discussion, some of who spark controversial opinions with the younger generation. I think having youth central groups REALLY help because we are supportive of each other, less APPEAL TO TRADITION compared to discussion with older generations “we have always been treated this way, why should we expect change?”
- I think focusing on where people have the most potential for greatness is a better way to live, than being distracted by the aspects we hate about them.
- Different people will ALWAYS exist. If we can learn to find ways to respect them instead of being occupied by thoughts of how their differences are a threat to us, we can more easily make peace with continuing our lives where they are also in it.