

*Oral Presentation of Submission by the
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (Ontario Chapter)
To the United Nations Special Rapporteur on
Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
September 2003*

On behalf of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists we would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our views, concerns and recommendations. As the time we have is brief we would like to highlight and bring to life for you, some of the points that we have made in our submission.

We share with you our accomplishments as we have been working extremely hard at every level within the labour movement to have dialogues about the destructive effects of anti-black racism and then put into practice measure^s to remedy these situations.

We also give you some background on our experiences within Canada, which gives you a sense of how long we have been here and how much we have contributed, regardless of our history being absent in many books and classrooms.

In our introduction we explain who we are, what we do and why, suffice it to say, we believe our existence is crucial to giving Black workers a voice to work towards ending anti-black racism amongst other things.

In spite of all of our hard work we highlight for you two of many key issues- Racism in Employment and the Labour Movement looking at the impact and our responses.

*Decisions that impact made
without benefit of input*

There are major unions in this country that have not hired an African Canadian full time staff person since the early 90's not because there are not qualified.

Since A Phillip Randolph headed the Canadian Division of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters there has only been one African Canadian head of a major union in Canada

Only in 2002 did a major union event provide an opportunity for African Canadian union members to meet in caucus

In certain sectors of the labour market, in particular the building trades, Black Workers are a rarity because of the hiring practices of union halls.

African Canadian union members feel isolated, marginalized, undervalued and frustrated in their unions. Consequently, there is a low participation rate and black workers frequently find themselves having to fight for their rights with both their employer and their union.

As a result of anti black racism the lives of many African Canadian workers and their families are ruined.

While central labour bodies and many unions have good policies on their books, there is a significant gap between what the policies say and what actually happens and there is no accountability.

We conclude on page 10 with 5 key recommendations

- 1. The establishment of a National Anti-racism Plan for Canada, Without this you can return in 10 years and nothing will have changed.**

2. Government of Canada implements a program similar to that of the Commission for Racial Equality in the United Kingdom. We need data, participation, programs, enforcement and legislation- without mandatory requirements progress is non-existent.

3. There is a labour component in the reports that the Canadian government makes to the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As we have demonstrated in our submission, the labour movement is a mirror of society. Regardless of their best efforts, racism does exist and we need trade unions to also be accountable for taking concrete measures to eradicate it.

4. Reparations, we truly believe that until this dialogue becomes a reality any measure we take ~~to~~ towards ending anti-black racism will be short-lived as the effects ~~of~~ racism ^{are} is directly linked to slavery and ~~is~~ ^{are} so systemic and part of every institution that achieving reparations is vital to our healing and survival. We are just as determined to achieve reparations, as we were to end slavery.

We would like to conclude by saying that we make this submission in the hopes that significant change will take place as Black people continue to suffer unspeakable humiliations, unjust treatment, discriminatory practices in employment, housing, medical care and the list goes on simply because they are black. CBTU advocates on their behalf but that ^{whenever} doesn't make up for the human toll as regardless of ^{we} right an injustice, the damaged human being that sits before us will never be whole again and that doesn't just affect the person, it affects their family and ultimately the entire community.

Thank you for listening and know that our expectations are high.

