

OUR LIVES

CANADA'S FIRST BLACK WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER

\$1.00

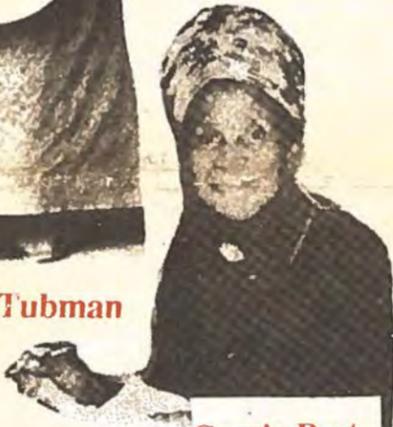
MARCH APRIL 1987

Vol. 2 No. 1



Harriet Tubman

Our Lives and The Black Women's Collective Salutes Women in Our History



Carrie Best,



Violet Blackman,



Mary Ann Shadd,



Christina Jenkins



Jean Daniel,



Grace Trotman,



Betty Riley



Tilly Mays



Kathleen Searles,



Kay Livingston,



Rosemary Brown



Vera Cudjoe



Gwen Johnson



Dorothy Wills

Issues Facing Black Women Today

Economic Issues

Black women suffer economically from the low paying and low status jobs which remain unaffected by affirmative action talk or pay equity jive. Collectively these permutations apply only to women who are close to the reigns of power, women who are in middle and high range clerical, semi-managerial or recognized skilled work. These women are usually white.

What Black women need is

A higher minimum wage since \$4.50 an hour can't feed anybody, least of all families where women are the only wage earners. (In some 30% of Black families, women are the only wage earners and since traditionally women's work is low paying and Black women's work even lower Black women have to work at two low paying jobs to make ends meet.)

A better wage for jobs like domestic work and service work, and higher wages in so-called entry level jobs such as telephone operators, secretaries, clerical workers, bank workers and nursing assistants.

A recognition of the value and worth of the jobs which Black women have been ghettoized into and conditions on the job which are decent and humane.

We also need to demand access to other occupations and not only to 'pink collar' or white women's occupations but to white men's occupations.

Right to Work and Universal Daycare

Some Black women are isolated in apartment buildings and housing projects, we need a 24 hour daycare system if women want to attend classes or work. If they are lucky enough to work and study Black women only have access to expensive daytime daycare which means they can't study in the evening because children have to be attended to. When women work they must have affordable and accessible daycare if they are to maintain their jobs.

Single mothers living on family benefits and in Ontario housing are trapped in the system. One sister tried for three years, her child having reached kindergarten age, to find a job. She had no skills to 'sell' because her efforts to find training and daycare subsidy were frustrated, and when she finally found a job, the wages were so low that she couldn't

One year ago this month **Our Lives** was born!

We want to thank all the sisters who helped us, wrote us letters of encouragement and donated money to the paper. We'll try to keep keeping on with your continued support.

Our Lives

Grace Channer, Faith Nolan,
Patricia Hayes, Dionne Brand,
Beatrice Bailey, Afua Cooper,
Carol Allain, June Gabriel,
Debbie Douglas, Marie Dennis,
Pauline Peters, Skye Stollmeyer

Contributors this issue:
Kim McNeilly

cope because her rent would increase once she was earning a salary and her benefits would be deducted. Single mothers in this situation are between a rock and a hard place.

Sexism in our Community

Black women (like all women) are conditioned to see relationships with men as the primary focus in their lives, they spend a lot of energy trying to do what the popular songs say. Black sisters must recognize that these roles inhibit our progress and weaken us. Black women often subdue their own tried and true intelligence to that of Black males in the effort of getting a man or finding a man or keeping a man. In this way we 'welcome' and participate in our oppression. Just because we feel that we share the history of racism there is a tendency to forgive the out and out sexism of Black men, or, to say, 'well they are oppressed too'. But increasingly we find that this is not enough to excuse their sexual oppression of us as women. For if we are so compassionate, they should be respectful and examine their sexist attitudes which give them certain privileges, as it oppresses us. Black men do not have any harder time than Black women. Statistics show clearly that Black women suffer more economic and physical abuse than Black males.

Black women have to examine and fight the weakening role that we are expected to play which negates our strength as if it was something bad. Traditionally we have been told that women's rights must be put second to Black rights. Courageous and visionary Black women have rejected and must reject that notion. We can no longer think that the two are mutually exclusive. A strong people are not strong through the weakness of women caused by male oppression.

Thank our strong mothers, aunts and grandmothers who took care of so many children on their own, who carried water on their heads, who worked in rich white women's kitchens, who didn't eat so that we could eat, who bore everyday hardship like a load on their backs, who kept the community together and who lifted Black men on their shoulders for many years.

Black women must move from strength to strength for our own liberation now, for the liberation of our daughters and for the liberation of our people. We must also raise better boy children that do not grow up to oppress women.

Today Black men must share housework, take on the emotional, financial and practical responsibilities of taking care of children and, accept and respect Black women in their rightful place among the leadership of the community. In fact Black men owe it to Black women to fight for Black women's rights. Black women today can accept nothing less.

Until those who have the least amount of rights achieve equality, such as we Black women, there can be no equality or freedom anywhere in the world. This must be recognized firstly by us, then by Black men if they want to call us sister. This they must participate in making if they ever hope to see freedom themselves.

*We thank the POSTIES
at station 'P' for their
generous donations*

Immigration - Amnesty for Underground Women

Many Black women face years of living 'illegally' and exploited in Canada. (See Issue 4 of OUR LIVES) Underground women need amnesty now.

Education

As a whole, our community has looked at streaming in the educational system but we haven't looked at how it affects Black girls. In particular, how it streams them into vocational schools which limit their job prospects to clerical, sales and service work. As it is, because of the racism in employment, upon leaving school even clerical and sales work is hard to come by for young Black women. As a result, their aspirations may be frustrated and limited to areas of their lives which they think that they have some control over. Namely, childbearing. Young Black women may begin having children earlier than they want to and without the economic resources to support them. Black women know only too well the difficulty of that existence, whether we were teenage mothers ourselves or whether we had teenage mothers. Loving as those relationships were, we know it can be rough. Often talked about as the 'problem of teenage pregnancy', we must realise how this is engineered by the sexist/racist conditions in the school system and the social system.

We need to encourage and support young Black women in their endeavours. Through advocacy in the schools, scholarships and support groups we might help to break the cycle of racism and sexism which haunts them.

How Can We Organize To Deal With The Issues

We must form a broad based coalition of Black women - Older women, younger women, activists, artists, lesbian women and straight women, working women and unemployed women, organised and unorganised women.

We must meet and air the issues, figure out where we're all coming from and figure out how to work together. We must create a free space, a place where we can talk as sisters.

Our creativity as Black women is legendary we must and can figure out the future.

Hello Sisters,

I have been wanting to show my support to you for some time. But first I had to start my own self re-education. I had to erase the propaganda taught to me about my race as a whole, and as a Black woman. Believing in their stereotype image of what a Jamaican is, I've suffered years of tunnel vision and lacked the sources and role models to find my true self.

I've since discovered Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Rosa Guy, Malcolm X and a long list of Black heroes. Some militants, some radicals, some support non-violent social change but all had and have the same common goal. For the first time in my life I'm truly proud of being Black and my newly found knowledge has given me strength in knowing that I am not alone. There were and are others that were denied the same information about themselves and our people.

The cause is old, but my understanding is new. I'm ready for the next phase of my new thinking with Our Lives!

Annette Russell

Nova Scotian Cultural Activist Delvina Bernard

by Faith Nolan

is a community civil rights feminist activist born and raised in Lake Loom where she went to high school, she moved to Halifax after high school to continue post secondary education at St Mary's. She is a counsellor at the Youth unemployment center. A music composer as well as guitarist she is a singer in the accapella women's group called Four the Moment. She has performed with Four The Moment on C.B.C.'s the Inquiry, the Winnipeg Festival and Regina Folk Festivals and Expo. She is treasurer for the Black United Front Of Nova Scotia. She has also committed herself to helping **Our Lives** start a Nova Scotian page each issue.

On singing in Nova Scotia Delvina says, -- you have to dig your heels in because as singers we are cultural bearers, we have to be aware of not only our lives but the lives of people in our community. Four the Moment has allowed me the opportunity to sit and talk with so many Black woman from different communities, the church sisters and just older women who tell me their experiences. Our songs have to contain the musical elements and some of the lyrics are written by community poet prose writers George Elliot Clarke, and I write songs about what happens in my own life, like when I was unemployed I wrote **U.I. Line**. When a friend of mine poet, Sylvia Hamilton wrote a screenplay about **Black Nova Scotian women**, I was inspired to write my feelings about my mother and sisters and I wrote, **I love you woman - Black Mothers, Black Daughters**. That's how songs come about naturally.



When I think about Black women's concerns and issues in Nova Scotia the bulk of the literature I've read and music I've heard comes from the U.S. because that is where most of it is published. There are very few books and music published by Black women in Nova Scotia. I see Black women as having a triple jeopardy situation. One it's a have-not province: economic oppression regional disparity, racial oppression, and on top of this being female and oppressed. It is important that Black women not think only of racial oppression but that we come together to fight all three on an equal priority base. My main concern is that this means there isn't a way to voice our lives in Nova Scotia. I feel hurt, almost as though we are behind the times. I've spoken to women from Vancouver, Toronto, Atlanta, Trinidad, Jamaica. They seem to be moving towards liberation faster. Nova Scotia doesn't seem to be like that it could be because of the

attitudes brought by the heavy Loyalist tradition and the isolated conditions wrought by slavery here. There doesn't seem to be a cry to say that we as Black women be recognized. We haven't fully analysed our significant contributions and we play down our essential role, - the torch we have to continue to carry as Black women in Nova Scotia. It's like the song I wrote "**A Rock and a Hard Place**". It bothers me that we haven't come and said this, so that it is seen in some kind of visible way like other women in other cities. We would be a force to be reckoned with.

Black women here do a lot in their lives and always have. When I think of my own strong women oriented family, nine children, seven girls and two boys. My mother did domestic work, my father earned money but my mother did everything, - divided up the money to keep the family running etc.. So did her sisters, so did her mother, so did the women up the street, like the whole community was female run. It's so funny (curious) because our community organizations were headed up by men. Black women in Nova Scotia have always excelled in formal education and community organization, for every qualified Black man there are probably ten qualified Black women, yet it seems like a Black man is dug up even if he's not as qualified to head the organization.

As a woman, I'm at a stage of realizing this, as I think are other Black women. We need to get together to validate our thoughts to each other and ourselves. We need to connect with Black women everywhere. Black women here who are political are contained within the church structure as is most of our community. We have to start working outside of this as well to deal with the legislators and educators because that affects the conditions under which we live as Black women.

SISTER WRITE

by Patricia Hayes

As the Black Women's Collective celebrated International Women's Day 1987 - we thought of our white sisters, hoping delicate operations have begun.

"The Black and White of It" by Ann Allen Shockley, Naiad Press 1980, 103 pgs.

"The Black and White of It" is the first collective of short stories about lesbians written by an Afro-American woman writer.

My favourite story is "A Meeting of the Sapphic Daughters" The story depicts so well the irony, and yes, even with a bit of humour, the racism Black women face in the women's movement. The other nine stories also have their merits showing the chains of homophobia, racism and sexism that are worn everyday in order for women to love women. The stories portray women in all walks of life from Mattie Brown, a Black congresswoman to Roz taking her lover home to meet her family for the first time. The one thing all the women have in common is that they want to be accepted as they are.

Keep your eyes and ears open for more information regarding *Black Women's Day Celebration* planned for Sunday May 24, 1987 at Regent Park Community center. The day is called Ba Thari - South African word meaning a place where women control, a

place where all people come from, a place offering nurturing, caring, sharing and warmth.

Too bad for all of you who missed Grace Channer's latest art show at Gallery 203. Her one woman show was dynamic. Her new pieces showed more inner depth and maturity - warning you that a great artist is on her way.

"The Fat Black Women's Poems" by Grace Nicholas - Virago Press, 1984, 64 pgs.

"It is Better to Die in the Flesh of Hope Than to Live in the Slimness of Despair" How nice for a woman to celebrate those of us who are never seen as wearers of the latest designs, using a popular brand of toothpaste or expressing pleasure with our full size figure.

The first section of "The Fat Black Women's Poems" deal with Black women of size in an upbeat tempo giving the reader an energetic picture of them, enveloping all aspects of life within themselves with great enjoyment and confidence.

In the other sections, the Guyanese born writer, writes vivid descriptions of her homeland, memories and observations as she was growing up.



My thoughts go back to the preparation and planning of International Women's Day 1986. With the theme being "No to Racism" it could not have been any other way but for Black women to be involved and give direction for the day. The Black Women's Collective and the Native Women's Resource Centre played a major role in pulling together a successful IWD 1986. It was quite obvious during our intimate involvement, that our role of leadership became an irritant to some of our white sisters from the IWD Coalition. It became apparent to us that in order for our white sisters to work with Black women, they had to accept and respect our leadership - time was needed for them to acknowledge and deal with their own racism. The identification of the fact that racism was alive and well among them lead to hostility and resentment within the ranks and towards the Black Women's Collective. The injuries sustained from last year's battles require more than band-aid treatment, more than covering your ass - major surgery and long term therapy is necessary - that which only white women can administer to themselves.

Black Women's Tracks by June Gabriel

A Profile of Black Courage

Upon entering her modest midtown home one is greeted by a beautiful woman whose smile radiates warmth and cheer. Alberta Johnson is a victim of multiple sclerosis, a disease that has grown progressively worse. But picture this woman exuding strength and courage.

In her younger years Alberta moved to Montreal to pursue a better life than she had growing up in St. John, New Brunswick. She had a zest for life and fun, and being a high spirited girl got involved in amateur dancing. She and her partner George Webb won many "jitterbug" dance contests at Rockhead's Paradise Club.

When she made Toronto her home she was embraced by many Black sisters with whom she made lifelong friendships; namely Millie Jackson, Masie Escoc, Bernice Sharp, I called them the fabulous four. She married and had two children Margaret (with whom she and her mother live) and Douglas who is now deceased.

Alberta made a career of modelling at the Toronto Art College and has many paintings and sculptured pieces of art given to her by students. Her beautiful African features made her much in demand. She was also



very active with the Negro Colour Guard since its inception. Alberta is an awesome and charismatic personality.

Alberta has had a few operations over the past 10 years, however none of them have helped her, if anything they have made her worse. Coupled with the failure of surgery and the death of her son, she has projected a strong cheerful outlook towards life; non-complaining or wallowing in self-pity a quality very few people possess. She attends as many functions as she can; she loves to party. Weather permitting, in the summer you can find her at the 3J's, a club not too far from where she lives; she also attends the Caribana festivities.

Our Lives and the Black women's community salutes you - Alberta Johnson - a beautiful, strong courageous Black woman.

Celebrating wisdom -down east style

Friends gathered on Saturday evening at the home of Margaret Grooms to mark the occasion of her Grand mother's move.

Grace Hayes 85 years of age, Alberta Johnson's devoted mother who has lived with Alberta and Margaret for a number of years, has opted to live in a senior citizens complex. It will be the first apartment she will occupy on her own.

The music mood set by Margaret (the D.J.) was a nostalgic one. Oldies from the 50's and 60's got the crowd into a dancing mood. Aromatic smells permeated the room from a large array of food which really made you indecisive in terms of what to eat. Stuffed salmon, fish cakes, ribs, ham, shrimp mold, chicken, rice and peas and homemade biscuits a typical down east party table.

Grace received many lovely gifts for her new home including a bottle of champagne with two glasses. She chose the apartment primarily because of its proximity to Margaret and Alberta's home, practically a stone's throw away. We would like to wish Grace Hayes good luck in her new home.



Food for the Soul of Any Black Woman

by Pauline Peters

The "Combahee River Collective Statement" was published by The Kitchen Table Press in 1986. I urge every sister to read it. It is food for the soul. It is food for the soul of any Black woman who has felt that she is struggling in isolation; it is reassurance for every Black woman who has ever doubted her perceptions and called herself paranoid, and it has words of empowerment and reaffirmation for every Black woman who has felt herself burning down low and wanting to stay home and leave the struggle to somebody else.

The Combahee statement is a powerful piece of writing because it is presented with conviction and without apology. It is very short; only nineteen pages long, so there is no attempt to elaborate on theory and this is important because we really don't have time for theories anymore. What we need is to know where to go from here and also how to pay attention to our history. And it is in this spirit that the statement is written.

The authors begin by paying credit to our sisters; "the thousands unknown--who have shared the awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggle unique". They ask us to remember that "contemporary black feminism is the outgrowth of the countless generations of personal sacrifice, and work by our mothers and sisters. They also pay credit to the lesbians who for the "first time in the race's history...refused to hide their sexual orientations in exchange for permission' to participate in the political struggle"

Knowing that we have a history makes us strong--knowing that we have a history of struggle makes us even stronger. And it would seem that we here in Canada have a particular need to know our history; not only

the history of "so where are you from originally?" but the history of Black people here in Canada, where we have been for hundreds of years, working and learning and pouring our sweat into the ground...but ask your children if they learned that in school.

The Combahee statement also addresses the history as well as the present reality of the psychological damage we have and do endure. I have, for example, been asked many times why

the Black women in Canada--the Black people in Canada can't seem to be able to organize and rise up against our oppressors. I have been unable to answer this except with a combination of rage and uncertainty. The Combahee sisters answer this question well. They know that we have souls in need of repair. They write: "the psychological toll of being a Black woman and the difficulties this presents in reaching political consciousness and doing political work can never be underestimated. There is a very low value placed upon Black women's psyches in this society, which is both racist and sexist. As an early member [of the collective] once said: "we are all damaged people by virtue of being Black women."

But this does not mean we are not strong. In the second part of the statement called "What we Believe", the collective offers us a definition not only of what they believe but of who we are--and who can deny that the two are not the same thing? According to the collective we are inherently valuable". Our "liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy." Perhaps to some of us this may seem to obvious to even state--but then who can deny that we are not so consistently damaged as not to be in need of constant reaffirmation of our inherent value? They tell us that we are clearheaded--

and remember this the next time you meet a white racist feminist or a sexist Black man-- "we realize that the only people who care enough to work consistently for our liberation are us". And how many times have you heard a Black woman apologize for taking care of her own interests? We will not accept illusions: "we reject pedestal, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as a human, fully human, is enough."

Yes --it is enough-- and the power and clarity with which these sisters present their argument is very impressive.

Read this book.



Our Lives and The Black Women's Collective Salutes Women in Our History

Marie Joseph Angelique, enslaved in Lower Canada, she ran away from a slave owner burning down fifty buildings in her wake in Montreal in 1733. She was later recaptured, beaten, dragged through the city and burnt at the stake because of her bid for freedom. **Harriet Tubman**, this famous abolitionist escaped from slavery herself returning time and again to lead some three hundred of our enslaved ancestors to freedom in Canada. She was known to threaten with death anyone who gave up hope on the way to freedom. Helping the cause of emancipation, she later served as a spy, a scout, a soldier and a nurse when war broke out between the north and the south. In Canada she lived in St Catherine's Ontario.

Mary Ann Shadd, born a freedwoman in Delaware in 1823, she moved to Canada in the early 1850's. A committed abolitionist, Shadd advocated for fugitives from slavery to flee to Canada. Settling in Windsor and later in Toronto she owned and edited the newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman* from 1853 to 1857, promoting the anti-slavery campaign. She also ran a small school in Windsor.

Annapolis Royal Rose Fortune, born around 1774 she came to Annapolis Valley with her parents as slaves of the Devonne family. She became a policewoman and 'baggage masher' in Annapolis Royal around 1825. Her descendants founded the Lewis Transfer. In her day she was to be found carting her transfer wagon full of luggage and goods to and from the decks of ships along wharf of that seaport town.

Rosetta Amos Richardson, born in Toronto in 1857, her mother and grandmother had escaped to Canada via the Underground Railroad. She and her husband owned and operated the first soul food restaurant in 1891 on York Street near Richmond. Later she was the first Black person to operate a lunch counter at the CNE. **Tilly Mays**, founding member of the Coloured Woman's Club, she was born in Montreal in the 1870's. The Coloured Women's Club was a benevolent club formed around the turn of the century when soldiers were returning home from the ignominious Boer War. The women of the club worked with the poor, sick and injured in hospitals and soup kitchens.

Christina Jenkins, co-publisher and editor, in 1923, of the London newspaper *The Dawn of Tomorrow* she was born in Chatham, Ontario in 1897. The newspaper was the voice of Black people in Southern Ontario like its forerunner *The Provincial Freeman*. At its peak in the fifties it had a wide circulation not only in Canada but around the world. The paper is still published periodically by her descendants in London, Ontario where she lived for over sixty years. Jenkins was also a staunch community activist and held positions on the executive of the Women's Council of Churches. She was also mother to nine children.

Carrie Best, a civil rights activist, journalist and commentator, she was born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia in 1903. She wrote articles on racial discrimination in Nova Scotia and championed the cause of Black rights. In 1949 her own newspaper the *Negro Citizen* began publishing nation wide. Dr. Best is known all over the country and in Black communities as a strong fighting woman even now in her 84th year. **Viola Desmond**, a Halifax beautician, in 1947 she attended the Roseland theatre in New Glasgow Nova Scotia where the 'Jim Crow' law required Black to sit in the balcony and whites in the main section. She bought a ticket for upstairs but there being no room upstairs, she tried to pay the difference to sit downstairs but was refused. She in turn refused to leave the downstairs section and was assaulted by a policeman and the theatre's manager. She was arrested, charged with not paying the correct tax of one cent and jailed for twelve hours. She was later tried and convicted with defrauding the federal government of one cent. Fighting back Viola took her case to the Supreme Court which later reversed the decision.

Our Lives Salutes

Violet Blackman, coming to Canada in 1921, she was born in Jamaica. Now in her eighties, Violet Blackman was a founding member of the Universal Negro (African) Improvement Association in Toronto in the early thirties. A Garveyite, she believes in the advancement of Black people and helped to build the Negro Credit Union. She still attends community meetings bringing her years of struggle and her wisdom to the issues. **Jean Daniel**, she grew up in Nova Scotia and later moved to Montreal. Working in a hat factory during the second world war she was active in the Black community and gave talks on Black history and culture. Later moving to Toronto she continued doing her work on Black history and also got involved in the Anti-Apartheid Committee in the late fifties. The committee raised funds and agitated for the struggle in South Africa and mounted a demonstration when Nelson Mandela was first arrested. Photographs can still be found in the community of Jean Daniel holding up a picket to free Mandela, in the early stages of Black struggle there. She was the president of the committee for ten years. Another of her major contributions to Black history in Canada was her founding of the Library of Black Peoples' Literature, now defunct, but which attempted in the years of its existence to preserve the history of Black Peoples.

Marie Hamilton, a teacher for fifty years in rural Nova Scotia she is a member of the National Anti-Poverty Association. Born in Beachville, Nova Scotia she taught school when there were no roads or modern day schoolrooms. Using her wit and her wisdoms she made her way through the harsh racist times, firmly believing that education for both Black and white children would make a better world one day. Two years ago, Marie Hamilton received an honorary doctorate from Mount St Vincent University marking her great contribution to education in Nova Scotia. She still tutors at the North end Public Library in Halifax and is an active public speaker. **Pearleen Oliver**, was born and raised in Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, she is a community leader and activist. She led the struggle in the 1940's for the first Black nurse in Nova Scotia. Recently she researched and presented the written history of Black Churches in Nova Scotia at the Black Cultural Centre there. **Edith Clayton**, living in East Preston, Nova Scotia, she is a basket weaver in the tradition of African basketry passed on to Blacks in Nova Scotia. As the well of that heritage and tradition she has taught many the art and has exhibited her work all across Canada. **Rosemary Brown**, until her retirement last year, she was the only Black woman to sit in the Canadian legislature, provincial or federal. As the member of parliament for Vancouver-Burrard, Brown was first elected to the British Columbia legislature in 1972. In 1975 she placed second in the race for national leadership of the New Democratic Party. A feminist, in 1970 she became the first Ombudswoman for the Status of Women. A socialist of the highest calibre she once introduced a private member's bill to establish collective bargaining rights for tenants, and, supported rent control. As a civil right activist she strongly objected to scapegoating immigrants for the failing economy. Brown came to Canada from Jamaica in 1951. **Dorothy Wills**, based in Montreal, born in Dominica in 1933, she studied in Halifax and then in Montreal in the fifties. Her work in education and social work led to her activism in the cause of justice for Black people. She was national chairperson of the National Black Coalition of Canada in 1972 and 1973 and the executive secretary from 1969 to 1972.

Betty Riley, the first Black woman to produce a Black television series, 'Black Is', in Canada. Born in Montreal her family dates back to 1871 here. Her work in the media and her concern over the lack of Black images in the media led to her many endeavours in the service of the community, including, a Black community radio workshop training youth and work at the Negro Community Centre in media arts.

Kathleen Searles, a school teacher, she was responsible for establishing a Black Heritage Program long before any Board of education did so in Toronto. In the fifties sixties and seventies, she worked actively in Black community organisations such as the Home Service Association, the U.N.I.A. the Toronto United Negro Association, the Toronto Negro Credit Union and the B.M.E. church where she began a program called 'Student Sundays' which motivated Black youth in their academic aspirations.

Gwen Johnson, her great grandmother came to Canada via the underground railroad. That history was not wasted on Gwen Johnson. In 1968 she and her husband opened Third World Books & Craft Store. The store now on Bathurst Street was and is a safe harbour for Black people in search of their heritage and history. It is also where many political discussions take place, Gwen and Lenny being themselves storehouses of Black history and struggle. Gwen is also an active and longtime member of the Universal Negro (African) improvement Association.

"WANTED, to purchase A
30 years of Age; that unde
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good character."

Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser

The Dawn of Toronto



"At the Merchant's Coffee House
strong Negro Wench [and] is so
of employ"

Halifax newspaper November 30 1784



The Colours
Montreal 1900



Negro Citizen

The Can
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Women in Our History

Black Woman about 25 or
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May 28 1776

Tomorrow

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Provincial Freeman

Women Club of

Man Negro Women's

Grace Trotman, she arrived in 1920 from Liberia, graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Music and for 45 years taught music lessons to more than 1,000 children. She was choir leader and organist at the British Methodist Episcopal Church and in the thirties established a camp for Black children. She is probably responsible for inspiring many of the contemporary Black women singers in Toronto, many of whom passed under her tutelage.

Kay Livingston, daughter of Christina Jenkins of the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, she was a pioneering Black actress and television host. Her community activism and her struggle for women's rights made her the founding president of the Canadian Negro Women's Association in 1951. **Rella Braithwaite**, a community activist, a journalist and historian for many years she was the Black history columnist for *Contrast* the Black community newspaper. She has written the only biography of Black women in Canada which she published in 1976. **Eva Smith**, coming to Canada from Jamaica on the domestic worker scheme in the fifties, she became an activist in the cause for domestic worker rights and Black rights in Toronto. A pioneer of the Jamaican Canadian Association of Toronto, Smith also counselled and tutored Black youth through that organisation for many years. Every year a scholarship is given in her honor to outstanding Black youth. **Lois De Shield**, founder of Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre. de Shield began her activism in Hamilton, Ontario, agitating against racist programming on children's television. A stalwart of the Black Education Project she's fought many a battle in the struggle against racism. **Marlene Green**, founding member and ideologue of the Black Education Project, Green came to Canada from Dominica in the sixties. The Black Education Project 1969-1979, through its advocacy on behalf of Black children wrought a radical change in the thinking and policy of educators in the Toronto

school systems. Prior to the work of Green and others there were no race relation departments, heritage programs or mechanisms for dealing with systematic racism in the schools. Veteran of African Liberation support organising and the struggle for self determination in the Caribbean, Green now works in southern Africa.

Fran Endicott, the first Black woman trustee of the Toronto Board of Education, from 1981 to the present, Endicott was central to the progressive changes at the Board toward Heritage Languages, questions of streaming, equal access and opportunity for innercity and Black children. **Margaret Gittens**, a long time activist, Gittens came to Canada in the sixties. Her major contribution has been in the area of tenants rights where she has worked for the past ten years. A veteran of African liberation support organising and an activist on immigration problems faced by Black people, she is also a member of the Coalition of Visible Minority Women and the Congress of Black Women. **Erica Mercer**, also a veteran of the sixties and the Black Education Project, Mercer was a guiding light of the Immigrant Women's Centre (a health centre in Toronto) and helped to organise other agencies and initiatives on behalf of Black women and immigrant women. **Anne Cools**, prominent in the Sir George Williams University uprising (1970) where Black students occupied the computer centre protesting against racism, Cools later became the first Black woman senator in the Canadian Parliament in 1982. She founded and worked for many years at Women in Transition, a shelter for battered women in Toronto. Her community activism led to her involvement in electoral politics and she gave David Crombie, the current Minister of Multiculturalism a run for his money in the riding of Rosedale in 1981. **Vera Cudjoe**, Founder of Black Theatre Canada some 14 years ago, she was born in Trinidad coming to Canada via England. Through good times and mostly bad financial times, she has kept the theatre going with the deepest conviction that the work of Black writers actors and artists must have a place for expression. **Keren Braithwaite**, one of the founders and first president of the Organisation of Parents of Black Children, she is a lecturer in the Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto and a founding member of the Organisation of Black Educators (CABE). Over the last ten years she has been in the leadership of the struggle for an anti-racist and equal education for Black children in Toronto schools.

^{This} These women and many more make and hold the long line of Black women fighters for justice and equality in Canada.

Source: The Black Woman in Canada by Rella Braithwaite

Bea on Art by Beatrice Bailey

"..You know you've been suckered..."

Well it was Black History month. Many groups staged events, white groups included, some for the first time.

Last year in January, an agency we (other Black artists and I), were involved with asked us to help in the effort to raise money for its Black programs, in the name of Martin Luther King Jr. Our group did not get any of the proceeds and we were told that our program was operating with a debt and owed money to the agency. That is, according to the agency. I vowed never again to be used in such a way.

So when I was asked by the Toronto faction of the Independent Artists Union to participate in a forum called "Working Odds-Race in the Art System", which was to coincide with a month long series of Black History events, warning signals went off in my head, and a feeling of resentment welled up inside of me. But, before I said no, I asked, what would the union gain by staging this event? And how will we benefit by being participants? The answer was that this particular event was conceived by the Affirmative Action Committee, a body of women artists who themselves felt the need for equal participation of women. They also saw the need for participation by people of colour and Blacks. And they said, in allowing for this discussion in a public atmosphere, it could only educate, inform and allow for a broader understanding of the issues.

Well, I thought, fine. As Black artists, we certainly didn't have the opportunity to participate in the art system, as it is, so maybe this forum would give us the chance to dialogue with our peers. The information gathered could only spread in the community and could not hurt us in any way. And since I've always wanted to tell the 'art community' how I felt, to its face, I said yes. I had nothing to lose anyway.

Although we were told that this was to be an informal sharing of personal experiences with colleagues I thought I'd better think about some of the issues that affect me as an artist.

These are some of the things that I considered: on the lighter side this event should not be billed as "working odds" it should be "working odd jobs" to survive in the art system. The way the word 'race' is used in the title is an issue for me, it is used to mean a different race from white since we all on the panel were not white. I would like everyone not only the art community to know that I am of the only race - the human race! I don't see my race as any different from that of a white person. However, I am acutely aware of the way the racist tide is going since Reagan has been in power in the United States: Black people being burned out of their homes, stoned and beaten, run over by cars, civil rights marchers stoned and arrested unlawfully and run out of whites only sections of town, white supremacists going on television to say that Blacks and Jews should be killed. I feel that it is only a matter of time before this madness flows into Canada. Canada likes to follow the United States. It is happening here in a less dramatic sense, that is the reason we have such forums to discuss the issue of race.

My experience is that I am being denied a decent existence because I am Black and of African descent. I am therefore economically oppressed and I am not encouraged to express myself artistically. The oppression is

twofold, the bureaucracy and the community proper. Black artists are denied access to information. It does not come into our community and when it does it is not in a language which we can understand. To have access to grants, shows, employment and other opportunities you have to understand bureaucratise and you have to have contacts and frankly you have to be white because Black art is not considered to be part of the national art. This sort of information is available to the "white art community" but I don't belong to the "white art community". The inaccessibility to this sort of information robs me of an audience which forces me away from artistic pursuits into all sorts of odd jobs, and I end up in the usual double job ghetto that is there for Black artists.

At the forum on February 11th because I had taken for granted that the audience would be white and middle class, I was surprised that the audience consisted mostly of people of colour and Blacks who did not need the enlightenment and who were already quite sympathetic to our plight. They had heard it all before and like me have had to live the harsh realities of discrimination. I had forgotten that whites believe that this is our issue and not theirs so why would they come?

The forum opened with the introduction of the guests by the moderator, a member of the I.A.U.. The people in the audience were told that they were expected to feel free to participate, offer suggestions and ask questions. Clifton Joseph opened the floor, he was quite eloquent in his delivery, shattering the myth of Canadian tolerance, coexistence and equal opportunities in this society. Not that white people believe that it exists. He referred to the abuse of our culture, the outright persistent stealing of our creativity by whites. He went on to point out that at awards hearings there are no categories for judging our art therefore we do not fit the established categories, so we get no recognition from the usually all white judges.

Richard Fung spoke of his Chinese background and the fact that being the youngest in his family allowed him to study art. But it wasn't until he was "out" and making gay docu-videos that his art received some attention.

Then it was my turn to speak, but Clifton and Richard had spoken about how it was out there, so I just shared some of my personal experiences about how the community has actually treated me.

Midi Onodera shared her personal experiences of being discriminated against, not as a Japanese-Canadian person who lived in Rosedale but as and out and active lesbian. That was when she found out that she was not white or accepted by her white peers.

The audience's participation was minimal. Because of the composition, they were probably hoping the panelists would be white and willing to share the secrets of solving the problem 'how to succeed in the art system'. A Black member of the audience said that she was sick of seeing Black people being used to deal with race issues or to educate white people and what makes this forum any different? She also wanted to know what would become of the information gathered at this event? Because I had asked similar questions we turned to the member of the I.A.U. who had answered my questions. The answers were the same as I referred to earlier. Another member of the audience said

we should form our own organization instead of relying on white organizations to recognize us. I personally find her statement ironic since she is a member of some of the most popular white groups which aren't of her own creation. Another Black woman said we should consider ourselves pioneers building and moving through the frontier. The problem is of course that she has been a pioneer for twenty five years and we are too, but the next generation should not be.

The event ended with us being still skeptical, feeling that nothing will come of this exchange. I am not holding my breath, but I am in a holding pattern. I am hoping something comes of this.

Meanwhile, members of the artist union were busy soliciting memberships. As a couple from the audience left they said: "You know you've been suckered, this was a membership drive."

Celebrating Ourselves

by Carol Allain

In Ontario, February is Black history month. This is a time when we all join together to recognize and celebrate the long and varied history of Black s in Canada. This is also a time when we must reflect on our past and gain strength from our struggles in order to ensure a future for our children and ourselves free from oppression. In celebrating Black history month, we are, in essence, celebrating ourselves. This celebration also serves to show us that our pain and suffering has not been in vain and that now, more than ever, we need to come together to remove the shroud that envelopes us.

We began with very little but through combined effort we have reached this point in the road, where we remain standing. Lately it seems that we are all going in different directions with different organizations but all wanting and working to achieve the same goals. What we need to do is to come together collectively, put aside our differences and pour our energy, strengths, pains and frustrations into achieving a decisive victory which will benefit not just a few of us but each and every one of us. This is not to say that we must push aside the other goals that a certain group or collective is working towards, only that we find the common element within our organizations and make that issue a priority, in a central concerted effort. In this manner we gain so much more for ourselves.

The Immigrant Women's Centre hands out buttons which make this statement: "Unity is our Strength". The truth of that statement rings clear, but some do not hear it or choose not to. We must, at some point, put aside distractions and get down to the monumental task of eradicating Racism, Homophobia and Sexism, only then can we realize our full potential.

At times, I feel a bit discouraged because I look around and it seems that we are at a standstill and will remain this way. With the arrival and celebration of Black History month I have begun to realize that our situation will not always remain the way that it is. The mere fact that we are celebrating Black History gives me hope.

Labour Struggles - Black Women Rising

"If you can't fight, kick. If you can't kick, bite."

[a woman in slavery to her daughter]

by Dionne Brand

Black Women's Collective Supports Metro Nursing Attendants

Jobs on the Line

Metro is deciding on turning any new full time position at the Municipal Homes for the Aged into part time hours. Not even part time jobs but part time hours. CUPE Local 79 is fighting the Metro move and many Black organizations, including the Black Women's Collective, have written letters to Dennis Flynn, Metro's Chairman, in support of keeping those jobs as full-time positions.

The Black Women's Collective has also collected some 200 signatures and sent a petition to Metro to stop the proposal which will further disadvantage Black women workers who make up more than 50% of nursing attendants. There is a high concentration of Black women in these jobs not only in the Municipal run homes but also in privately run homes and if this is the example that the city is setting, what will private homes do?

The effect of converting new full-time jobs into part-time hours will mean that women employed in those jobs or waiting to be employed will only be hired for part-time hours without benefits or job security. And, no full-time jobs will be available for part-timers who wish to apply. A woman can conceivably work many more hours trying to make do.

Black women are already discriminated against and exploited in employment. Now Metro is planning to put further burdens on the positions in which we are employed. This is not equal opportunity and it surely won't be equal pay. Since we would have to dish out money from our already meagre wages for benefits and our already tired backs would have to absorb more work for essentially less money.

Metro claims that they are not eliminating jobs; that this is just a 'scheduling' problem. But since when does Metro concern itself with something as routine as work schedules in municipal homes?

The point is that many Black women working in this area are primary wage earners for their families and would prefer, in fact, they need full-time jobs. As Muriel Collins, a Black woman union activist who has worked for 21 years in Municipal Homes, says in the CUPE Leader "I feel that the women - the people - working in nursing homes should be given a chance for a full-time job after a few years of part-time work. Right now, they're not given any opportunity for promotion. Some people have been working part-time for six years". Seventy-nine percent (79%) of all part-timers are Black women or immigrant women.

Metro can hardly obscure these facts. But they have instead thrown out a bunch of technical terms and appointed a consultant when faced with the opposition. This will cover the real and present hardship that they will cause Black women workers. The move will also erode the right of workers to be represented by a union since we're sure that women who work part-time hours will not be considered to be in the bargaining unit.

If you are concerned with this issue and take the side of Black women workers in the Municipal Homes for the Aged, write to:



Metro Chairman Dennis Flynn and Members of the Executive Committee, City Hall, Toronto, M5H 2N2.

Make it simple. Say - No to conversion of new full-time jobs to Part-time hours. Yes to equal employment and equal opportunity for Black women workers.

Justice for Josie Makotoko

Josie Makotoko, a nurse in Sudbury, is waging a one woman fight against racism in the Sudbury and District Health Unit. The only Black nurse of four hundred, Josie, a nurse for twenty years was denied promotion while other white nurses with less experience and less qualifications were promoted over her. When she grieved through her union, the Ontario Nursing Association in 1979, she won the grievance and was made a senior nurse with supervisory status.

However the Sudbury and District Health Unit did not comply with the decision fully. Though they gave Josie the title and the wages, she was denied the responsibilities of the position and relegated to doing odd jobs around the office such as cleaning and moving boxes and files. They were determined to put Josie in her "place".

Since winning the grievance Josie has been systematically harassed, constantly insulted on the job and has been subjected to racist remarks and treatment without end.

When she tried to grieve for non-compliance, she was deserted by her union, who were scared off by management with threats and manipulation. Management told other nurses that their jobs were in peril from Blacks and foreigners who would take their jobs if they supported Josie's case.

So Josie went to the infamous Human Rights Commission which dismissed the case despite the evidence, themselves consorting with management. In their judgement, the Medical Officer of Health's behaviour was significant of bad judgement and not racism. So Josie went to the Ontario Ombudsman, who judged that the OHRC's investigation

failed to uncover all the facts and was unreasonable. Despite this, Human Rights refuses to reopen the case and until two weeks ago, Josie could not get her own union interested in her plight.

Meanwhile in November of last year, Josie was suspended three times in the month and given a warning of dismissal. She still endures daily verbal and mental abuse, has been assigned to non-nursing tasks and has been literally going it alone. Josie's struggle has been going on for the past eight years and it is all that she can do to keep on fighting. Finding another job is impossible since she has been whitelisted as a troublemaker and anyway Josie refuses to give up. The quantity of resources which management has thrown into bullying and trying to downtrod this one Black woman is amazing. Yet, still they have not been able to fire her because in fact her work and her qualifications are excellent.

Josie who is a strong and dignified woman and who has given thirteen years of work to the Sudbury and District Health Unit, says she is determined to 'fight to the finish'.

Her fight has been taken up by the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and other labour and women's community activists. Anyone wishing to assist please contact the Coalition in Toronto - 652-3192.

Shirley Samaroo Shelter Update

Well a victory was won for Black women workers and Black women who are battered. The Shirley Samaroo shelter affair reported in our last issue is over and control of the shelter restored to the rightful hands of immigrant and Black women. Makeda Silvera was reinstated and the shelter is open through the efforts of Black and immigrant sisters working together. The Black Women's Collective was proud to play a decisive role in the affair and feel confident that Black women will not want for shelter from abusive men.

"During the busy harvest season in the fall of 1862,.. female fieldhands on a Louisiana sugar plantation in Union-occupied territory engaged in a slowdown and then refused to work at all until the white landowner met their demand for wages.

...in 1866, the 'coloured washerwomen' of Jackson, Mississippi organised themselves and established a price code for their services. Though the strike in June of that year was unsuccessful, it marked the "first known collective action of free Black working women in American history, as well as the first labor organisation of Black workers in Mississippi."

From *Labour of Love, Labour of Sorrow* by Jacqueline Jones

Young, Gifted and Black

by Debbie Douglas

Young women are seldom given the opportunity to voice their experiences as individuals who are young and female. This is especially true in the case of young Black women. On writing an article on young women and immigration a decision had to be made about what group of young women I would interview. I decided on Black women for two reasons. As a Black woman (not so young) who is also an immigrant, I felt that there was a store of many experiences which exist and need to be heard. Secondly, given the racist society we live in and the inability or unwillingness of the dominant culture to acknowledge or even recognize the existence and importance of other ethno-cultural and racial groups, I felt that it was of great importance to allow non-European young women to talk about their experience as immigrants. Too often I have heard the question "where are you from!"

The historical experiences of Blacks who are Canadian are often denied or revised. The Black woman, in spite of her nationality (Canadian or not) is always seen as a newcomer-an immigrant. The Canadian governments, through programs like provincial welcome houses and their propaganda of multiculturalism, gives the false image of Canada as the land of no discrimination, equal opportunity and justice for all. These programs are set up to remove the spotlights from governmental policies like the immigration policy which systematically discriminates on the basis of race and class.

The following is a group discussion of four women who are all twenty-one years of age or younger. Three are Black and from the Caribbean. One is of East Indian heritage and from South America. They have been in Canada between four and ten years. They are all immigrants.

Rosalie: I came from Jamaica ten years ago, I was eleven then. When I hear about how wonderful Canada is, I think to my first year here. While in grade six at a west Toronto elementary school, I got in a fight with a white student. He called me nigger one day at recess and I beat him up. I was the one who got in trouble with the principal. This was my welcome to Canada.

Marcia: What I remember about my first year here, is school and trying to find a part time job. Every place I went they wanted to know if I was eligible to work in Canada. Some of them didn't even want to accept my social insurance card as identification. After all that hassle I usually didn't get the job.

Shakela: I had the most problems in school. I'm from Guyana and everytime I spoke, the students laughed and the teachers would make me repeat my answers. I haven't had any problems looking for work.

Annette: I've been looking for a job for the last two years. I can type sixty-five words a minute, use a word processor and mostly everything else to do with an office. I placed lots of applications and still haven't found a placement. I cannot believe the racism in Canada.

Marcia: What bugs me is that other people don't seem to see racism. Just because you don't get called 'nigger' or 'paki' on the street, does not mean that you do not experience racism.

Shakela: I was called 'paki' all the time in school. The teachers tried to stop it but the kids just did it when there were no teachers around. School has been the worst



experience I've had since coming to Canada.

Annette: It took me at least two years before I felt comfortable enough to speak. I spoke Jamaican patois and the teachers and students were always asking me to repeat myself or they laughed.

Rosalie: I failed my first year in school because I didn't answer any questions in class. The rest of my school work was alright but I still failed.

Marcia: I was placed in an ESL class. The majority of us were from the Caribbean with a few students from Portugal. We did very little in class most of the time so I had problems with my other classes.

Rosalie: I remember us reading "Lord of the Flies" in English class and feeling embarrassed and mad about the reaction of the other students. The teacher just pretended that he didn't know what was going on.

Annette: Leaving school has not made anything better. I have worked harder than everyone else just to get hired. The bosses always want to know if you're eligible to work in Canada.

Shakela: They want to know so that if you're not landed they can pay you less money than the white people. Being an immigrant is difficult. Even if you're eligible, to work, you have to prove it. It's like being a criminal.

Marcia: Sometimes I'm glad that I'm here but all the hassles are frustrating and sometimes not worth it. Pressure builds up and you do crazy things.

Rosalie: Whenever someone who isn't white gets in trouble, the police start talking about deportation. You're constantly having to watch your back. Sometimes I feel like going home.

An article based on the same group discussion has been written for OISE's R.F.R. periodical. Although the experiences here come from only four women, I believe that other non-European women have had similar experiences since coming to Canada.

Our youths are facing a system which has not changed its attitudes or policies. They face racism in the classroom and the workplace. Many are finding it difficult to handle that 'new life' they've been given. Most of our families are not equipped to handle the psychological damage of racism. Our youths end up on the streets or in hostels where the very few Black social workers, counsellors and community workers attempt to give back to these young people a sense of self.

It is time that our political and community organizations to take up the issues of the youths. We need to begin by creating a place where the Black Youth can see themselves. They need support in facing 'the Canadian Experience'.

Rella Braithwaite

- instilling awareness and Self pride

by Kim McNeilly

Rella Braithwaite is a third generation Canadian woman who has been living in Toronto for many years. Born in Listowel, Ontario, a rural area one hundred miles from Toronto, she came to the big city as a young girl. Among her contributions to the Black community is a column she wrote for Contrast newspaper on Black history. But Rella was not particularly interested in rhyming off her resume, so instead we discussed her views on various issues of importance to Black women in Toronto.

- Oppression. That's a force pressing down on Black women still today. How do you perceive this problem?

-Yes, our women sometimes face oppression from their menfolk. We have to teach our children good values. Black men have been taught to be aggressive and since most Black women are, to some extent, assertive, this does not produce a good mixture.

- What do you feel are some important needs of Black women ?

- It will be a long time before Black women are financially secure. They are in need of more and better daycares, and emotional support from their menfolk; they have to cope with raising a family and pursuing a career.

- Not to mention pursuing involvement in the community. You have six children and you still managed.

- I have been actively involved in women's organizations and I definitely feel Black women need to work with each other in order to survive and keep our culture. This is difficult in Toronto as we are scattered in various areas. When we work together we know where we're coming from, we know our deepest problems as a race, thereby we relate to each other. But in this society some of us are so unaccustomed to working together that we sometimes have to go through a learning process in order to get along with each other and respect our members in authority.



- Where does the Black woman fit into the Feminist Movement ?

- The Feminist Movement has done wonders for women, despite the negative aspects. Few of our women had the time, nor the financial power to devote to the struggle but most would agree much has been gained. I sometimes feel, as in the Civil Rights Movement, that because of the dedication of a few leaders, we all benefit.

- Do you think that racism in Toronto is subtle and more or less unaddressed ?

- Racism in Metro has been sophisticated for a long time, which makes it hard to identify. We have people from every race here, therefore the elimination of discrimination is a vital goal for all of us all. Perhaps the highest degree of discrimination is found in employment, but the situation is improving due to the work of the Human Rights Commission and such groups.

- Who have been your role models ?

- When I first came to Toronto as a young teenager my first role model was a mature Black christian woman known as Madam Brewton. She operated the Brewton Comfort Shop on Yonge Street, had mixed clientele

and trained beauticians. She was a dedicated business woman who also worked with the youth, instilling in them the awareness of Black history and self-pride as well as knowledge of the Bible. I admired her. Today it is refreshing to see so many Black business and professional women giving of their time to Metro's Black functions.

There is still much Rella hopes to accomplish. She intends to continue her projects in Black history which has been her area of interest for many years. Through this arena she has performed a great service to students and helped them to find pride in their heritage. Rella has in fact extended the role of her own role model.

Have You Heard

Sister fights racism in Waterloo

Alieth Harris of Kitchener/Waterloo is the sister who's son Henry was tied to a chair during a math class held by teacher Gerd Hilgenberg in October 1986 at Grand River Collegiate in Waterloo. Hilgenberg said he was joking because the boy was wandering around the classroom after being repeatedly asked to sit down. As Alieth Harris said "this was a form of bondage. It's a form of slavery." She also wants the withdrawal of the so-called "classic" Huckleberry Finn from class study as it repeatedly uses the word "nigger" and has made her son experience chest pains and insomnia with it's hurtful racist connotations. He is the only Black child in his class. These incidents have led Sister Alieth to fight for anti-racist education and justice within the Waterloo Board of Education.

In a meeting held with the Waterloo Board Chairman Elizabeth Witmer, who in this case is a woman, said, "the board does not take lightly charges of racism or discrimination that cannot be backed up by irrefutable fact." What more evidence could she want but a Black child tied up in front of a classroom? Richard Allen, a community member, asked the board directly if they would gather the



Black community together and consult them. In a later interview Chairman Witmer said she had no comment.

We as Black mothers, daughters and sisters know the courage and conviction it has taken Alieth to acknowledge and fight against institutionalized racism. She is fighting for the rights of all Black children and finally for all people who believe in equality in demanding the removal of hurtful racist literature.

How can we support her? Send a letter demanding :

1. That a public apology be made to Henry Harris and Alieth Harris by the school teacher Gerd Hilgenberg and Waterloo Board of Education.

2. That the Board establish a committee on the education of Black children that includes membership of Black educators and parents.
3. That the staff, Board and teachers of the Waterloo Board of Education be given workshops on race relations/multiculturalism.
4. That our diverse cultural heritages be worked into the academic curriculum.

Send to:

Chairman's Office,
Waterloo County Board of Education,
Education Center
51 Ardel Ave.
Box 68 Kitchener, Ontario. N2G 3X5

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