



CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN OF CANADA
LE CONGRES DES FEMMES NOIRES DU CANADA



Congress of Black Women
of
Canada

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★ *National Executive* ★



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CF/NC

INTRODUCTION

The Congress of Black Women of Canada is a Voluntary, non-profit organization which is dedicated to improving the welfare of Black Women and their families in their local communities, and nationally; to clarify and bringing due recognition to the role of Black Women in Canadian Society.

The Congress also seeks through a program of education and service to motivate Black Women to participate in the life of the communities in which they live.

The Congress rejects the tradition of oppression and exploitation which excludes Black Women from the mainstream of society.

OUR HISTORY

The first Conference of the Congress of Black Women of Canada was convened in Toronto in 1973 by the Canadian Negro Women's Association and chaired by the late Kay Livingstone. The enthusiastic response of individuals and organizations across the country to this first coming together of Black Women from all walks of life resulted in subsequent conferences being held in Montreal (1974), in Halifax (1976), in Windsor (1977).

At the fourth Conference, it was unanimously resolved that a national organization be created. Consequently, representatives from across Canada were elected to form a National Secretariat.

At the fifth Conference held in Winnipeg (1980) the National Organization was launched. The Constitution was ratified and a National Executive Council was selected.

The sixth Conference was held in Edmonton (1982), the seventh in Toronto (1984) and the eighth will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia (1987).

OUR OBJECTIVES

To provide a network of solidarity for Black Women in Canada, and to be a united voice in the defence and extension of human rights and liberties for Black Women in Canada.

To foster a climate in which it is acceptable for Black Women to openly examine the issues which affect us and our families.

To plan and implement a program of education for Black Women.

To develop relations with other local, national and international organizations whose aims and objectives and purposes are in keeping with those of the Congress.

To constantly re-examine our objectives and purposes and adjust our efforts accordingly.

OUR STRUCTURE

National Executive Council

The National Executive Council comprises:

1. Officers
 - Immediate Past President
 - President
 - Vice-President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
2. Provincial Representatives
 - Elected from each province at the general meetings.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to:

1. All Black Women, sixteen years and over,
2. Black Women's organizations whose aims, objectives, and purposes are similar to those of the Congress, as Associate Chapters.

SOME OF OUR ISSUES AND CONCERNS

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Congress believes that everyone should be guaranteed the right to equality of opportunity without regards to race, sex, age, nationality, etc. and the right to safety and security of person.

HOUSING

The Congress believes that decent and affordable housing should be enjoyed by everyone. This includes co-operative non-profit and government housing programs. The Congress recognizes promotion of Consumer action for better community development.

HEALTH

The Congress believes that all people should be aware of available health care and should have the best medical care in the community. Through a public education program, health problems and concerns can be discussed, including the relationship between members of the medical profession and Black Women.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The Congress believes that Black Parents should explore the issue of complete child development - physical, mental and emotional development - readiness for school - the role of cultural activities in positive self concept. It recognizes the importance of quality day care facilities which includes lunch and after-school programs, and family day care.

EDUCATION

The Congress believes that Black Women should be able to pursue adult education and training and receive information about alternate careers and counselling, so that they can train to develop the necessary skills.

PENSIONS

The Congress recognizes that a program of education about pensions - eligibility, carrying pensions from job to job (portability), retirement, splitting or divorce - should be available to Black Women.

ELECTIONS

National elections are held every two years at the National Conference. Voting rights are as follows:

Officers	one vote each
Individual members	one vote each
Chapters	one vote per six members
Affiliates	one vote

FEES

Individuals	\$5.00
Affiliates	\$35.00 per year
Chapters	\$5.00 per year registered member. Local executives may charge additional membership fees suitable to their local situation.

A Chapter may be formed when there are six (6) or more Black Women in a geographical area. A chapter must abide by the general rules and regulations of the National Executive Council. Local government and programs are however, administered by a locally elected Board of Directors.

Individual memberships are accepted from women who reside in areas where there are less than six Black women. In an area where there is a chapter, an individual may not become an individual member.

Other Black Women's organization whose aims and objectives are similar to those of the Congress can become affiliates. The Congress does not require that an affiliate organization abide by the general rules and regulations of the National Executive Council.

The Congress of Black Women of Canada holds its National Conference every two (2) years. Programming for the Convention is done by the National Executive Council on the advice of representatives. Topics for workshops and seminars reflect the needs of the membership.

National Committees are appointed by the National Executive Council on a regular basis, to examine issues of national importance, make recommendations and implement actions. Participants on these committees are usually members of The Congress with the necessary expertise; appointed if the situation warrants it. Since the start of the 1984-86 term, three national committees have been formed to examine the following issues:

- Affirmative Action
- Parenting
- Male/Female Relationships

Other committees in the past have looked at various subjects including: Black Women and Pensions and Equality Now.

The Congress of Black Women is a dynamic and thriving organization which aims, among other things, to promote a positive image of Blacks in the Canadian society.

JOIN US AND HELP



PRESIDENT

GLEND A P. SIMMS, PH.D

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy (Educational Psychology)
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Master of Education (Educational Psychology)
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Bachelor of Education
University of Alberta, Edmonton

CERTIFICATES:

Certified Psychologist, Alberta

Permanent Professional Teacher's Certificate,
Alberta, and Saskatchewan

Teacher's Diploma, Jamaica

SUPERVISOR

Intercultural Education, Race Relations
Regina Public School Board,
Regina, Saskatchewan

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Political-Messianism: A Case Study of Michael Manley
Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Department of Educational Psychology,
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

2. Language Change Amongst a Group of Jamaican Immigrants.
Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Department of Educational Psychology,
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta
3. Multicultural Education: The Sleeping Vision.
4. Rapunzel, Can You Hear Me? The Women's Movement and Its Relationship to Minority Women.

Delivered at 1979 CRIAW Conference, Edmonton, Alberta.
Published in Resources for Feminist Research, Fall, 1980.
5. The Role of Language in the Acculturation of Jamaican Immigrants-The Canadian Context.

Education for the Disadvantaged. Vol. III, No. 4, Spring, 1978.
6. Simms, Glenda and Stevenson, Wes. Cross-Cultural Education Through Recreational Services, Recreation Canada. Vol.44 No.3 July, 1986.

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

1. Educational Needs of Blackfeet Students.
Funding Agency: Muttart Foundation
2. Executive Producer: Grandmother, Mother and Me
(a six part video on the lives of women from different racial and cultural backgrounds, who live in Regina, Saskatchewan)
3. Author:
Multiculturalism: Strategies and Changes for the Regina Public School Board.
4. Participant in Film: Speaking of Nairobi

PUBLIC SERVICES

1. Member of the Native Curriculum Review Committee,
Department of Education, Saskatchewan (1982 - 1984).
2. President (1982 - 87) Congress of Black Women of Canada.
3. Member of the Teacher Certification Board
(Department of Education, Saskatchewan (1983 - 84)

PARENTING

by Dr. Dorothy Willis

The topic "Parenting" is being introduced, at this time, in an attempt to accomplish two objectives. The first objective is to high-light material which will be covered in the workshops this afternoon, so that you will feel that you are really missing something if you do not attend this afternoons sessions. The second objective is to stimulate your interest in the topic and sub-topics in such a way, that you will want to explore them in greater depth not only at this afternoon's workshops, but in private study in the future. I know that you will agree that this twofold duty is a difficult task to accomplish in 20 minutes, after a nice lunch. However, let us try to accomplish the task together. Can I also suggest that as I make the presentation, you jot down those points which you either agree or disagree, so that those statements could be amplified in the workshop sessions.

As a mother of two young adults, born in Canada, now age 23 and 21 respectively, living at home, and who have both attained a first cycle university degree, it would be safe to assume that I have had some opportunity to practice "parenting" in North America. As a person who has made the physical and emotional transition from place of birth, a factor over which no one has control, to adopted country which has become home both by choice and allegiance, it is reasonable to assume that some experience has been gained in selecting those parenting elements from both cultures, which influence, in a positive way, the growth and development of the child. Additionally, because my work as social worker, and teacher has placed me in a position of of counsellor to many parents and their children, over the years, much of what I will share with you today will contain elements of both an objective (theoretical) and subjective (personal and practical) reality.

Many of us in this room, come from what we used to refer to in the sixties as the Black Diaspora. We were not born in Canada -- a fact, I might add, which ought not to reflect in any negative way on our Canadianness in the sense that we are neither greater nor lesser Canadians because of an accident of birth. Place of birth is not a significant factor amongst caucasian Canadians, since the Canadian people have elected a Prime Minister and several representatives of governments who were born elsewhere. So, it is my hope that we can come together as Black Canadians and collaborate with each other, share our perception of parenting skills, and not allow the fact that 70 per cent of our group was born elsewhere, to separate and divide us. What we need to do today, it to draw on the best aspects of all the cultures represented in our Black community in order to arrive at skills which will translate into "Positive Parenting".

Many of us come from a majority situation, in which we formed the largest part of the total population. Many of us learned and practiced parenting within the extended family context. In such a situation, parenting is made easy, because there are many persons such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and neighbours who have become as family, and who share in the upbringing of our children. Parenting within the extended family context lightens the burden for both parent and child - since parents have help in catering to the needs of their children, and the child is never neglected, because there are always adults around to give love, affection, attention and administer discipline. Parenting within the nuclear family, where the mother and father must assume complete responsibility for the basic needs and socialization process of their offspring, is infinitely more demanding and draining. For many of us, it was necessary to make a psychological transition from extended family parenting to nuclear

family parenting. Some of us left our children with the extended family as we journeyed abroad to make a new and better life for ourselves and prepare the way to be reunited with our children. The more resourceful among us were able to build support systems in our new environment, very much akin to the extended life-style we left behind.

Research by Robert Hill, published in the September 1980 issue of the Journal of the National Association of Social Workers on "The Strengths of Black Families" identified five areas of strengths:

1. Strong kinship bonds: Black families, he states, have a tendency to take relatives into their homes i.e. elderly family members, and children born out of wedlock.
2. Strong Work Orientation: Black families, he states, encourage their children to become industrious workers and instill in them that success comes from hard work. Blacks have had to exert extraordinary efforts to achieve economic stability and financial success.
3. Adaptability of Family Roles: Decisions among Black families, he indicates, was not "matriarchal" as we have been led to believe through such media distortions as the Moynihan Report, but rather, egalitarian, as long as the families were intact. Furthermore, he states Black husbands often help their wives with household tasks and childrearing.
4. Achievement: Hill's findings reveal a higher percentage of Black families than white families want their children to attend college. And, a higher proportion of Black students than white students cited parental pressure to achieve at school work and graduate from high school and college.

5. Religious Orientation: The data points to the fact that most Black families teach their children that religion is important. Were it not for strong faith in God and a deep religious conviction, many of us would not have survived some of the more brutal periods of history, and some of the low points of everyday living which we experience to this day.

Following the study by Hill, a more recent study was conducted in Ohio by two social workers, David Royse and Gladys Turner. Their conclusions have reinforced Hill's findings and have contributed additional data. That is:

1. Black families teach their children to respect themselves, so that they can attain self-respect, which would increase their self-concept and thereby obtain the respect of others.
2. Black families teach their children to be happy, even when times are hard.
3. Black families stress co-operation within the family - that is, the interdependence of each member of the family unit.
4. Black families are not over-zealous in the discipline of their children - Black families love their children, and because of that love, attempt to put structure and discipline in the life of their children, and this must never be mistaken for excessive punishment.

At this time, let us take a moment to examine some of the highlights of parenting in the many cultures represented in this room. As parents, we:

- ° assist our children with their child-rearing practices
- ° we raise our children to be respectful to adults and those in authority
- ° we assign chores to our children to teach them a sense of responsibility
- ° we teach our children to share whatever they have, so they can grow up to be caring, unselfish adults
- ° we spank our children for contravention of rules to teach them right from wrong, and to demonstrate to them that we mean that we say

- ° we model for our children, values and moral standards
- ° we teach our children the value of religion and respect for a supreme being
- ° we tend to leave education to the schools, not only to teach our children what is best for them, but to discipline them when necessary.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Nevertheless it gives us some idea of areas for parenting utilized by the cultures represented in this room.

During the International Year of the Child, in 1979, the United Nations released a declaration which listed the Rights of Children, and enumerated them as follows:

THE RIGHT to affection, love and understanding

to adequate nutrition and medical care

to free education

to full opportunity for play and recreation

to a name and nationality

to special care, if handicapped

to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster

to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities

to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood

to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin

Parenting in North America is in keeping with the United Nations Declaration, but it is even more complex, because the Rights of Children have been enshrined in legislation. A document entitled "Young, Equal in Rights and Responsibilities" prepared by the Quebec Human Rights Commission, endorses and explains children's rights as contained in the federal Charter of Rights. This document lists the rights of the child as follows:

- ° The right that the child's body be free from any attack or threat to its integrity or its well being. This right touches particularly on:
 - ° corporal punishment
 - ° physical violence or threats of physical violence
 - ° the quality of food, and
 - ° the quality of the environment
- ° The right of the child not to be worried, penalized or punished because of their opinions, or the expression of them
- ° The right of the child to be respected, just as adults do. Like adults, children have their dignity, honour and reputation to safeguard.
- ° The right of the child to the protection, security and attention that must be provided to him or her by his or her family, or the persons acting in their stead. This means:
 - ° to see that their child's basic needs are satisfied
 - ° to make sure that the child is not deprived of any rights
 - ° to help the child to assert rights when they are jeopardized
 - ° to see to it that the child is not threatened

- ° to make sure that the child can live in peace, calm and confidence
- ° Parents have to show concrete evidence of their availability and presence; and,
- ° Parents have to demonstrate a willingness to listen to their children

This booklet goes on to explain that in order for the adults to fulfill these obligations to their children, they must be able to count on the collaboration of their children.

Suffice it to say that the parenting style in which we were nurtured, as children, has influenced our parenting practises. Sometimes, these practices are not always in conformity with the rights of children in North America. The discrepancy between what we do and what we ought to do partially explains the high incidence of our children coming to the attention of the social service authorities. Many of us here today, who were brought up by parents and grandparents who felt that you must never spare the rod and spoil the child, would find ourselves in contravention of the law, if we practiced that philosophy with our children. The Youth Protection and Children's Aid Services would certainly want to have a talk with us. As a result of those talks, the number of our children coming into care has increased dramatically within the last five years, both in Quebec and Ontario.

During my search for material for this presentation, I listened to a tape entitled: "Winning at Parenting Without Beating Your Kids". Please indulge me, as I share with you, some of the highlights of

my research. Both from the theoretical and practical point of view, the research reveals that successful parents seem to be parents who have been able to raise their children from infancy in an environment which enable them to develop and attain maturity.

- ° They provide structure and routines for their children
- ° They teach their children a sense of responsibility, by giving them responsibility for little things, gradually escalating to more important items, events, and issues
- ° They teach their children to be responsible for themselves and their actions
- ° They teach their children to make decisions, commencing with little decisions, such as what dress do you want to wear, escalating gradually until they are able to make decisions around a career choice or marriage partner
- ° They teach their children the value of money - how to spend it, save it and budget with it for necessities as well as luxuries, by giving them an allowance
- ° They teach their children to follow through with their responsibilities by giving them clear, concise, and specific instructions
- ° They reward their children's positive efforts with either tangible or intangible tokens of appreciation
- ° They set limits for their children, so they can know and recognize where the boundaries are, and where the rights end, so that they do not trespass on the rights of others
- ° They set realistic and palatable consequences for contravention of limits, or non-co-operation around chores and responsibilities
- ° They do not own their children's problems - rather they explain their expectations, consequences and then question, whose problem is it? By so doing, they teach their children to own their behaviors and decisions, so that they do not, in later life, blame others for their predicament

- ° They demonstrate to their children, that they mean what they say, by following through with promises as well as consequences
- ° They make known to their children that the house is our home so we should all enjoy it, have good times in it, and take care of it
- ° They realize that mealtime, is celebration time, it is a time when the family comes together, and so they keep mealtimes pleasant and use it as an opportunity to communicate with each other about the day's events
- ° They do not use mealtime to scold their children or complain about anything
- ° They model for their children, those behaviours which they expect to find in them
- ° They teach their children to talk - how to phrase a question in order to receive a positive response to a request
- ° They teach their children how to accept a negative response in answer to their request
- ° They teach their children how to resolve conflicts, so that all involved in the conflict can be winners.

As I explored highlights of the job-description of "POSITIVE PARENTS", or successful parents, I could not help but make the analogy between the role of a parent and the role of a person in the helping professions. In a very sense, POSITIVE PARENTING or successful parenting involves creating a helping relationship in which the child is nurtured until it reaches that state of maturation in which the human being is fulling in charge of himself. Virginia Satire, Family Therapist states: "A mature person is one who, having attained his majority, is able to make choices and the context in which he finds himself; who acknowledges these choices and decisions as being his; and who accepts responsibility for their outcomes." This state of maturation could only be attained through POSITIVE PARENTING.

We all know it is not possible to cover all aspects of such a multi-faceted topic as PARENTING in 20 minutes. What we have attempted to do is to look at some of our old customs, from the old country. Look at the rights of children in a complex world. And, look at some positive methods of parenting that nurture the child and mould them into mature adults. Hopefully, this expose has sparked sufficient interest to encourage you to attend the workshops this afternoon.

I thank you very much for your time and your attention.

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