



## Message from the President



President of UARR,  
Nigel Barriffe

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On behalf of the *UARR* Board, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to all our funders, supporters and members for their continued support of our mission to provide educational programs and research that address racism in our society.

Over the past year we have been particularly active on issues of discriminatory policing, with a focus on the issue of police carding and police interactions with racialized people, including police violence as experienced by the mentally ill. *UARR's* Project Coordinator, Jaafar Dirie has worked diligently on *the Roots Project*, a community program focusing on systemic issues including policing as it affects youth in the Somali and Tamil communities. He discusses the project in more depth elsewhere in this newsletter.

We have also worked on issues of Islamophobia, as well as religious profiling and discrimination against recent immigrants. Additionally, considerable board and staff time has centred on protecting public media for linguistic minorities through a submission to the *Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission* concerning the cancellation of multicultural programming by a major Canadian cable provider, *Rogers Inc.*

We have participated in various press conferences in partnership with organizations such as the *African Canadian Legal Clinic*, *Dawanet*, the *Chinese Canadian National Council*, the *Toronto and York Region Labour Council*, *No-one Is Illegal*, the *Coalition of Black Trade Unionists*, and others, to make our collective voices heard on these issues.

The significant community mobilization against police carding in Ontario, the *Black Lives Matter* movements across North America, and issues of serious structural racism affecting Indigenous peoples throughout the country highlight the importance of recognizing and confronting ongoing racism in our society. Unfortunately, the kind of rhetoric emerging from the US election indicates how easily communities are divided, and discrimination encouraged, along lines of race and ethnicity.

While there is growing recognition that unequal societies are less healthy and happy for people of all income levels, the focus of our work and that of the community organizations with whom we collaborate concerning how racism and ethnicity intersect with inequality remains of utmost importance.

Many thanks to our Administrator Yumei Lin and Jaafar Dirie, our Project Coordinator, for all their energy and dedication to the organization. *UARR* also relies heavily on its volunteer board not only for governance, but also for organizing many of its activities.

I would like to thank all of the Board for their continued dedication and time. In particular, I would like to express our deep appreciation to outgoing board members, Gordon Pon and Sharon Simpson. Both Gordon and Sharon have been pillars of the organization, in Sharon's case for many years. Gordon has been central to much of our work in recent years. Both of them will be sorely missed on the *UARR* board and we are grateful for the generous time and support they have given during their service as board members.

**Nigel Barriffe**

**President of the Board**

## The Roots Project

From funding from the city of Toronto, *Urban Alliance on Race Relations* has embarked on a two-year project to address systemic issues in two of Toronto's priority neighborhoods.

*The Roots Project* has been designed to give voice to Somali and Tamil Canadians by bringing them together for intergenerational and intercultural dialogues regarding the following key systemic issues: identity, criminal justice, health, education and community engagement. These five areas will be explored by hosting a series of six dialogues with Somali and Tamil Canadian youth and elders in 2016, and three intercultural dialogues in 2017.

The dialogues will examine how past and present experiences have informed how these communities view their capacity to broaden civic engagement, navigate the justice system, as well as improve education and health outcomes in Toronto. The intent is to capture and build on knowledge lost between generations and develop a community toolkit to address systemic issues. In addition to the five key systemic issues, discussion on poverty reduction strategies will be incorporated. The project will conclude with a call to action summit in 2017.

## The Bridging Project

Last year, *Urban Alliance on Race Relations* successfully completed *The Bridging Project*, a ten-month research project intended to assess the accessibility and efficacy of reintegration programs in Toronto for young women and men who self-identify as Somali Canadians. The project was initiated by *UARR* as Somali Canadian community members in Northern Etobicoke brought forth concerns regarding the lack of reintegration services for Somali Canadian youth upon release from incarceration. Accordingly, this project was implemented through a participatory action research approach that ensured inclusion from within the Somali Canadian community. As a result of this research approach, we successfully engaged Somali Canadian participants in the research advisory committee, as community youth researchers, focus group participants, and interview participants.

## Project Findings: Challenges in Reintegration and Stories of Success

*The Bridging Project* concluded that anti-racism and anti-oppression narratives, discrimination, societal stigma, police profiling, and carding dominated the challenges related specifically to post-incarceration. These challenges adversely affected educational re-enrollment, employment, sense of security, and overall societal reintegration for many participants.

Cases of successful reintegration were found to be directly linked to family support, as this was the prevailing narrative throughout both one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. Somali Canadian youth, compared to their incarcerated peers, greatly benefited from traditional Somali culture, which promotes strong family and communal ties especially through difficult times. For many, their families provided the financial and emotional support needed during and after incarceration.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed to address gaps in the efficacy and accessibility of reintegration services as a result of *The Bridging Project*.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Reintegration services need to provide culturally appropriate services that meet the needs of the community members in Northern Etobicoke. | 4. Further examination of the policies and practices of the Toronto District School Board in respect to youth offenders is required.        |
| 2. Reintegration support services should start while individuals are incarcerated in preparation for reintegration.                           | 5. Previously incarcerated individuals and their families must be informed of and have access to reintegration services prior to discharge. |
| 3. Service providers with program cycles need to address gaps in services.  |   |

**Jaafar Dirie,**  
**Project Coordinator**

## Racial Profiling in Child Welfare:

Renu Mandhane, the Chief Commissioner of the *Ontario Human Rights Commission* recently indicated she would be requesting that all child welfare agencies in Ontario collect and disclose race-based statistics, including the number of Black children in their care. The Chief Commissioner must be commended for her position on this matter. These statistics are important to help identify and address systemic discrimination in the child welfare system, including anti-Black racism.

My colleagues and I presented a paper on racial profiling in child welfare at the *Racial Profiling Dialogue* which was hosted by the *Ontario Human Rights Commission* in February 2016 (Pon, Phillips, Clarke, & Abdillahi, 2016). We call for the formation of a

Black (Children Aid's Society) CAS. Our point of entry into this discussion of a Black CAS is through a recognition that the child welfare system is based on structural and systemic anti-Black racism, colonialism, and neo-liberalism (Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). Below is an excerpt based on this paper.

In December 2014, the *Toronto Star* reported that 41% of children in the care of the *Children's Aid Society of Toronto* are Black, despite representing only 8% of the city's population (Contenta, Monsebraaten, & Rankin, 2014). They also reported that Black children were found to be kept in care longer in comparison to other groups and 48.6% of all the children in care are taking behaviour altering medications.

In 2014, the 46 child welfare agencies in Ontario received \$1.46 billion in funding from the Ontario government last year. We estimate that the amount spent per year by Ontario child welfare on the apprehension of Black children is \$60-70 million.

The child welfare system largely operates without oversight and accountability, and with impunity. The *Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS)*, which is the governing body of currently 47 children's aid societies in Ontario, is incapable of holding these corporations accountable because it relies on their membership payments to carry out its activities. This financial arrangement compromises the *OACAS'* neutrality and accountability.

We recommend the formation of a Black *Children's Aid Society* that is based on an anti-Black racism framework. The anti-Black racism framework would actively resist racial profiling in child welfare that targets Black mothers and unfairly blames Black families for structural factors such as racism, sexism, and poverty. A Black CAS will better meet the needs of Black children, families and communities, reduce the numbers of apprehended Black children, and improve outcomes for Black children and families (see Pon, Phillips, Clarke, & Abdillahi, 2016).

### **References:**

- Contenta, S., Monsebraaten, L., & Rankin, J. (Dec. 11, 2014). Just 8% of Toronto kids are black. But 41% of kids in care are black. *Toronto Star*, A1, A33.
- Pon, G., Gosine, K., & Phillips, D. (2011). Immediate response: Addressing anti-native and anti-black racism in child welfare. *International Journal of Child,*

*Youth and Family Studies*, 3 & 4, 385-409.

<http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ijcyfs/article/viewFile/7763/2554>

Pon, G., Phillips, D., Clarke, J., & Abdillahi, I. Racial profiling in child welfare: The need for a black CAS. Paper presented at the Racial Profiling Policy Dialogue. Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission & York University. February 17, 2016.

**Dr. Gordon Pon,  
UARR Board Member**

### **THE ASHOK CHANDWANI MEDIA AWARD**

The *Urban Alliance on Race Relations* is pleased to announce the third Ashok Chandwani Media Award for a print and online article for outstanding journalism on Human Rights issues.

The award and \$500 will be presented at the *UARR* 2016 Awards and Fundraising Dinner on Thursday September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 to a journalist who through excellence in writing and reporting has raised public awareness of Human Rights.

Past recipients are Carol Goar, Enzo DiMatteo and Jim Rankin.

For further details, please check the *UARR* website, our Facebook page, or follow us on Twitter.

### **Toronto Community Benefits Network: Bringing Diversity to Public Infrastructure Projects**

Since 2013, the *Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN)* has brought together more than 40 diverse resident associations, community-based organizations workforce development agencies, trade unions and supporters with a vision for infrastructure development that supports inclusive training, employment and social enterprise opportunities for all residents. The goal is to use the community benefits model to bring equity hiring to all major infrastructure projects in Toronto, starting with the Eglinton Crosstown. While this is the first time a Community Benefits Framework has been signed for a major public infrastructure project in Canada, it is not a novel idea. Community Benefits initiatives in Toronto are built on a growing

track record of successes: Airport and rail in LA, Port of Oakland, New Haven Hospital, Vancouver Olympic Village and Island Highway, and all San Francisco city projects.

### 5 Pillars of Success

In order to make the community benefits model work in Canada, 5 key factors are required: government (Metrolinx), community support, building trades unions, industry (Crosslinx Transit Solutions), and workforce development. Community, labour, and workforce development agencies have been the backbone of the *TCBN*. With the signing of the Community Benefits Framework in April 2014, Metrolinx came onboard. Reaching out to residents who are historically underrepresented in the trades (women, returning veterans, aboriginal populations, and newcomers to Canada), and mapping a pathway for them to get into these jobs has been the biggest challenge.

### The Challenge: Resident Engagement

These target groups either knew little about the trades or had never considered a career in the trades, mainly because of misperceptions that these jobs are less intellectually stimulating, low paying, and dangerous. Many who had tried getting into the trades were greeted with complex barriers. In 2013, the *TCBN* embarked on a mission to reach out to these potential candidates. We worked with community groups, resident associations, ethno-specific agencies, faith communities and gender/youth specific agencies to tap into the target populations.

To our knowledge, this resident engagement strategy is the first in Ontario to link community, workforce Development, and labour, working with grassroots groups to reach deep into their own communities as well as directly with labour, workforce development, and an employer to create a pathway for residents to get into the trades. The residents we met were hungry for opportunities. Over 80% were unemployed and not connected to any workforce development agencies (Toronto Employment and Social Services or Employment Ontario). We busted the notion that these populations were not interested in the building trades. We found highly skilled and experienced immigrants who had found it difficult to practice their skills here and were frustrated with the complexity of the trades. In some cases, they faced discrimination and abuse at the hands of mainly unregistered non-union contractors. To date, we have over 300 pre-qualified residents ready to work or go into training to work on the Eglinton Crosstown.

### The Struggle Continues

Engaging residents and building pathways for historically under-represented communities to enter the building trades was never going to be easy. Still, there are reasons to be optimistic. Starting with the Eglinton Crosstown, both labour (represented by a number of building construction trades) and the community are at the table to figure out how to change the composition of the workforce to reflect the diversity of Toronto residents. To date, we have had success stories with residents moving into Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, LiUNA Local 506 Carpenters' Local 27, and the Operating Engineers Local 793.

Much work needs to be done but for now the future looks green. Our next step is to move from resident engagement to concrete changes: making sure that Crosslinx Transit Solutions' policies and programs, and the billions of dollars in transportation, infrastructure, and planning funds that Metrolinx directs each year will have a real impact in supporting our communities' efforts to create pathways for residents into the trades and other good jobs. The light rail trains are coming. This struggle is real. Welcome aboard! Visit us at <http://www.communitybenefits.ca>.

**Prince Sibanda,**  
**Project Director of the Toronto**  
**Community Benefits Network**

### Project Civic Engagement: Working with Muslims in Canada

*DawaNet's* Project Civic Engagement (PCE), created in 2014 in response to a growing culture of Islamophobia in Canada, has spearheaded a number of highly successful initiatives in 2015-2016 to build the capacity of the Canadian Muslim community for political advocacy and engagement.

In early June 2015, PCE hosted *I'm Muslim — What's it to You?*, a panel discussion on Islamophobia, attended by over 150 community members at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga. The panel, comprised of academic and activist Dr. Katherine Bullock, lawyer Hussein Hamdani, Khadijah Kanji, filmmaker Amar Wala, and moderated by journalist Steven Zhou, aimed to help Muslims understand their potential political impact in the federal election.

Next, supported by the Laidlaw Foundation, Unifor and United Steelworkers Canada, PCE, in partnership with the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) embarked on a participatory youth project called *Young, Canadian and Muslim: Making Our Ballots Count!* This

culminated in a federal election debate in September 2015 at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, endorsed by over 25 community mosques, attended by over 350 youth and live-streamed across the country. This resulted in over 25 positive media stories about youth engagement in the federal election, and led to young Muslims becoming involved in the elections campaigns of a number of candidates.

In November 2015, DawaNet also held a discussion with Swiss academic Dr. Tariq Ramadan, moderated by filmmaker and writer Tendisai Cromwell, at the Islamic Centre of Canada. The conversation centred around Muslim communities in Canada moving beyond the politics of division and identity, in the aftermath of the federal election, and was attended by over 500 young people.

PCE has also been instrumental in NCCM's Stronger Together campaign, unveiled in December 2015, which aims to build networks of Muslim activists across Canada who can work with their elected representatives to ensure legislation and policies that are reflective of Canada's diversity. Later this year, supported by the Laidlaw Foundation, and the Atkinson Foundation, PCE will be launching its Muslim Leadership Development Fellowship, which will provide a handful of young Canadian Muslims with the tools, training and experience over the course of a year to become successful political staffers. The hope is that this will promote a more representative and inclusive political system, and help to address systemic Islamophobia.

**Sanaa Ali-Mohammed,  
DawaNet**

### SAVE THE DATE

UARR's Biennial Awards and Fundraising Dinner will be held on:

**Thursday September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016, 6-9pm at the Dim Sum Ding Restaurant, 421 Dundas Street West, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Toronto.**

This year marks UARR's 41<sup>st</sup> year of providing leadership and action on anti-racism and related issues that make Toronto a better place to live for all of us.

We welcome nominations for both the Race Relations and Media Awards. Please check our website for more details: [www.urbanalliance.ca](http://www.urbanalliance.ca)

### Race, Disability, and "Being My Whole"

How does anti-Blackness interact with homophobia, transphobia, and inaccessibility? How do people experiencing these multiple oppressions negotiate identity, safety, and belonging within ethnoracial spaces, mainstream LGBT spaces, and spaces for people with disabilities? These were the questions that brought a panel of black queer and trans Toronto activists living with a disability to the Anti-Black Racism Conference being held at Ryerson University in February. "Being My Whole Self" explored themes around identity, disclosure, safety, and belonging. The three panelists, Sonia Lowton, Romeo Dontae, and Eddie Lindsay Jr., spoke movingly about their personal experiences of discrimination within the intersection of racism, ableism, and genderism (the belief that gender is a binary and that the only two acceptable genders are male and female).

As the concept of intersectionality has gained wider attention and use, there has been a corresponding improvement in the acknowledgement of people's multiple realities and the need to be able to bring their whole self into every space in the community. In this way, we must pay particular attention to the stories of those for whom the experience of living with a disability is further complicated by racial prejudice and intolerance toward queer and trans people.

One of the panelists, Eddie, is a student in the Community and Social Services program at George Brown College and a volunteer at sprOUT Toronto, a group for LGBTQ+ adults with intellectual disabilities. Eddie describes himself as a black, queer person with a disability who is an activist. In the spoken word poem that he wrote and performed for the panel, Eddie refers to his experience as having "four strikes" against him: "Black, I am gay, I am a person with a disability, I am fat." The poem talks about being rejected by his friend, family and church because of being gay. The sense of isolation is made worse by the continued racial profiling of a hyper-visible black body by the police and retailers. Eddie's visible mobility challenges affect the ways in which he can access and navigate spaces; but, as a person with an invisible disability, a ramp or an elevator does not guarantee inclusion inside. "I pick and choose whether to disclose my disability and queer identity depending on how safe it feels."

Inclusion is measured by the extent to which one can fully be themselves: whether they can access opportunities and participate in all activities and processes without facing barriers, be they physical or attitudinal.

While our community spaces don't intend to marginalize anyone as we work toward collective liberation, privilege and bias have the potential to divide our communities when left unexamined, and can push the narratives of black lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer and questioning people with disabilities to the margins. One of the most compelling quotes about inclusion comes from the sociologist, anti-racism researcher and OISE professor, George Dei: *"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone."* This way of thinking invites us to not only consider the needs of those in the room, but to wonder who is not there, and why:

- Are the spaces where we gather and work toward liberation accessible, not only from the physical standpoint but attitudinal as well?
- Does the way we communicate create barriers for people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities?
- Do we consider both visible and invisible disabilities when we talk about accommodation?
- Who feels most at home and why? Whose voices and lived realities are left out from the dominant narrative?
- Thinking beyond labels and rainbow stickers, how do we ensure a safe and affirming environment for gays, lesbians, bi and queer people of colour and folks who are gender-diverse?

In today's shaky context, where we navigate new fiscal realities and funding models while learning to do increasingly more with increasingly less, building coalitions across identities is more crucial than ever. The *Urban Alliance on Race Relations* has been expanding its outreach and engagement to build relationships with the LGBTQ+ community and the disability rights movement, creating more spaces for conversations on Being Our Whole Selves.

**Ilaneet Goren,**  
**UARR Board Member**  
**Diversity Specialist,**  
**Community Living Toronto**

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

### Urban Alliance on Race Relations 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

As part of the 40th Anniversary celebration an evening reception was held and honoured guest, Dr. Akua Benjamin, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from UARR for her work in social justice and women's issues. *Urban Alliance on Race Relations* and the *Ontario Human Rights Commission* co-sponsored a panel discussion on "Resisting Racism: Past, Present and Future."

## URBAN UPDATE—MARCH 2016



*Resisting Racism Panelist: Winnie Ng (Moderator), Nigel Barrieffe, Shaheen Azmi, Idil Abdillahi & Billie Allan (Photo Credit: limnaphotography.ca)*



*UARR Board and Staff - BL: Nigel, Megan & Ilaneet / ML: Reshma, Gordon, Malika & Tam / FL: Yumei, Dr. Akua Benjamin (UARR Award Recipient), Dharma & Anthony (Photo Credit: limnaphotography.ca)*

### 1st Annual Spirit of Mandela Freedom Walk

On a beautiful Saturday afternoon, on June 20, 2015, a crowd gathered on Nelson Mandela Boulevard (University Avenue) with Native drumming provided by SpiritWind Women's Hand Drum Group and South African drumming done by Muhtadi African Drums Ensemble, setting the mood for the day's celebration. This celebration marked the 1st Annual Spirit of Mandela Freedom Walk, concluding at Queen's Park. The walk's purpose was to bring the community together to share in the commitment to a common goal of an inclusive society that is free from discrimination, where all persons enjoy full rights to dignity, fair treatment and equal opportunities. This is what Mandela stood for, and this is what a great amount of people were walking for!



*UARR Representatives with His Excellency Membathisi Mdladlana, High Commissioner of South Africa, and Consul General of South Africa, Nyameko Goso*



*SpiritWind Womens' Hand Drum Group*



*Spirit of Mandela Freedom Walk Planning Committee and Volunteers*

## The Bridging Project Community Forum Event

On Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, Urban Alliance on Race Relations hosted its community forum for The Bridging Project at The Vue in North Etobicoke. "The Bridging Project" was a qualitative research project advancing knowledge of the experiences, barriers, challenges and successes of previously incarcerated self-identifying Canadian Somali youth. This event was held to include the community in a discussion on the gaps in services provided to Somali youth who have previously been incarcerated.

## URBAN UPDATE—MARCH 2016

There was an amazing turn out of community researchers, service providers, families, and other community supporters gathering together to discuss this issue and brainstorm new ways that the community collectively can address it. The forum included speakers from service providers such as Breaking the Cycle, Midayanta Community Services, and Regent Park Community. UARR Executive Director Jason Merai spoke on behalf of Urban Alliance, and UARR Researcher Jaafar Dirie presented on the findings of the project.



*UARR Executive Director Jason Merai (Top), Researcher/Organizer Jaafar Dirie (Middle), and Master of Ceremonies Megan Fitzgerald (Bottom).*



*Spoken Word Artist Mustafa (Left), Breaking the Cycle Speaker Gary Newman (Middle), and Midayanta Community Services Speaker Fowzia Duale (Right).*

## The UARR acknowledges the generous support of:

City of Toronto  
Atkinson Foundation  
Ontario Human Rights Commission  
RBC Royal Bank of Canada  
Ryerson University Diversity Institute

Assistant Vice President/Vice Provost Equity Diversity  
Inclusion, Ryerson University  
Continuing Education Students' Association of Ryerson  
CUPE Local 3904, Ryerson University  
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and attendees of the UARR 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



## Membership up to date?

### Membership Categories (please check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ General \$ 10  
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UARR Annual Membership (except Patron) is  
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**We welcome your comments and input**

