

# Solidarity BEYOND Black History Month

## What is Black History Month?

February is Black History Month, but many in our community might not understand why (or how) we can strengthen our solidarity with Black communities during (and beyond)



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**Solidarity:** in simple terms, solidarity is about showing sympathy and support. However, solidarity isn't about feeling good or not putting in work



Solidarity is challenging and risky. Solidarity "is about changing unjust systems" and includes "daily, lifelong practice[s]"<sup>1</sup>

Solidarity is not "flashy;" instead, a lot of the work is solitary, including learning and unlearning biases

**In community conversations, many folks shared that they did not know what Black History Month symbolized or how/why we were meant to celebrate it**

Even folks who have studied in Canadian schools since birth (ex. kindergarten to grade 12) acknowledged that they didn't know too much about Black history and that the subject was not discussed often in school

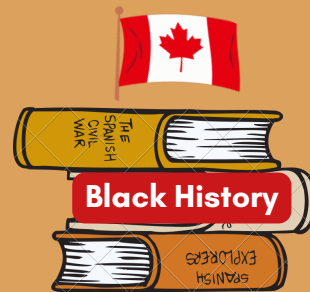
Black History Month was recognized by the City of Toronto in 1979 and by the Canadian government in **1995**



Black History Month honours the legacy of Black folks in Canada and USA

- This month is a reminder to continue our learning journeys about Black Canadian and American histories, experiences, and accomplishments while also pushing forward conversations about systemic inequality, discrimination, and racism that continue today

Black History Month reminds us that **Black history is Canadian history**



Although Canada is often depicted as USA's 'nice' and 'polite' neighbour, it's important to recognize that Canada (and Canadians) are NOT immune to anti-Blackness and that the Canadian state also practiced enslavement and continues to enforce **anti-Blackness**

**anti-Blackness:** "the policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent"<sup>2</sup>



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# Some key moments in Black Canadian history that we should all be learning about

(Including in schools)

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3. Government of Canada, 2023
4. Tattrie, J., and Cooper, C., and Ma, C. (Eds.), 2021
5. Vancouver Public Library, n.d.

**The Underground Railroad:** a “network of secret routes and safe houses used by enslaved Africans to escape into free American states and Canada with the support of abolitionists and their allies”<sup>3</sup>



- **Abolitionists:** people who are in favour of putting an end to and removing oppressive practices and/or institutions (which are often rooted in racism from their conception) like slavery, the criminal justice system, etc

**Africville:** an African-Canadian community that was founded in Halifax, that was denied government services (“such as paved roads, running water, or sewers”), and that was later targeted by the government for “redevelopment” in the 1960s (which often happened to racialized neighbourhoods), forcing many residents out of their homes<sup>4</sup>



**Hogan's Alley:** a neighbourhood in Vancouver that was home to Vancouver's Black population. The community was displaced over time by “redevelopment” which included the construction of a viaduct (type of bridge) in the 1960s<sup>5</sup>



# Other key moments that Canadians should learn about include

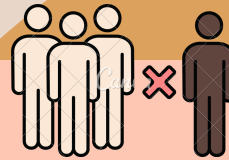
## The 13th Amendment

- Legally abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the US, except as a punishment for crime



## Jim Crow Laws

- Enforced racial segregation in Southern states of the US
- **Segregation:** The practice of separating people as an act of oppression, largely on the basis of race and/or gender



## The Civil Rights movement in the US

- **Civil rights:** the rights that people have because they are a part of the country (must be provided without discrimination)

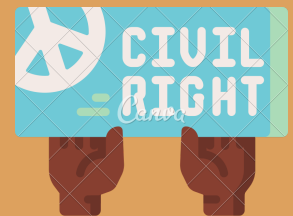
## The Black Lives Matter Movement (global)

- A political and social movement that highlights the racism, discrimination, and inequality facing Black folks. The movement began in response to police brutality and violence that claimed the lives of Black folks in the US in 2013, such as Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner, and has continued to gain global attention following continued police violence and killings of Black folks, such as George Floyd, in 2020

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# Some notable figures in Black History

It's important for non-Black folks to recognize and name Black History figures who worked tirelessly to pave the way to advance the rights and seek justice for all

**While this is not a complete list, we at CCNCTO are committed to learning more about Black figures such as**

6. Darrisaw, M. and Cooper, C., 2023
7. Toronto Public Library, 2021
8. Ibid.

- **Audre Lorde:** a "Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet" who used poetry to resist racism and sexism<sup>6</sup>
- **Harriet Tubman:** an abolitionist who led enslaved people to free American states and Canada through the Underground Railroad
- **The Honourable Jean Augustine:** the first Black woman to be elected into Canada's House of Commons. Augustine was also largely responsible for designating February as Black History Month in Canada<sup>7</sup>
- **Marsha P. Johnson:** a Black trans woman and activist who fought for LGBTQ rights
- **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:** an influential Civil Rights leader who sought to advance civil rights for people of colour and Black folks in the US through non-violent means
- **Rosa Parks:** a Civil Rights activist who is famously stood up to injustice and segregation on the bus by refusing to give up her seat to a white man
- **Ruby Bridges:** the first African-American child to enter (and begin desegregation) an all-white elementary school in 1960
- **Viola Desmond:** an activist who was wrongfully jailed and fined for sitting in a "Whites Only" section of a theatre. In 2010 the Canadian government issued an official apology and pardon for their wrongdoing and in 2018 Desmond was chosen to appear on the \$10 bill<sup>8</sup>

Our learning is not **limited** to Black History Month. We must always think about how we can include Black voices, since racism cannot be addressed unless we are also working towards combating anti-Black racism!

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**For Chinese community members, it's important for us to consider and recognize how many of our rights and freedoms have been a result of Black organizing and activism**

The Civil Rights Movement "introduced new ways of thinking about justice and equality in the United States"<sup>9</sup>

- During the Civil Rights Movement, many "Asian American leaders drew inspiration from - and provided support for - Black freedom fighters"<sup>10</sup>



As well, there was Black community support for Asian Americans as well, including during Japanese internment and the murder of Vincent Chin (a Chinese American who was the target of a racially motivated assault)



Although the Civil Rights Movement occurred in the US, civil rights continued to advance in Canada

- Many ideas brought forward during the Civil Rights Movement, such as Black Power and anti-war stances, continue to inform and influence Chinese Canadian organizing



Image source:  
Lang, C., 2020

In current times, we have also seen Chinese solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement and Black solidarity against anti-Asian racism

When many of the rights we hold from "birthright citizenship...to tell[ing] our stories in education...to the civil rights we enjoy" can be traced back to Black social justice movements, how can we NOT stand in solidarity against oppression and systemic racism?<sup>11</sup>

9. Lang, C., 2020

10. Ibid. 11. Ibid.

**There is no Asian American/Canadian liberation without Black liberation and justice**

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- 12. Lang, C., 2020
- 13. Tseng, A., 2021
- 14. Demsas, J. and Ramirez, R., 2021

# Combating the Model Minority Myth

Our [previous resource](#) discussed the model minority myth, including the divide it creates between Asian communities and other racialized communities

- The model minority myth is used to “invalidate claims of inequality toward non-white Americans,” such as Black Americans<sup>12</sup>

Instead, if we can better understand that anti-Asian racism and anti-Black racism **‘look different’** but are a part of the same system, of white supremacy and systemic racism, then we can work to dismantle these systems

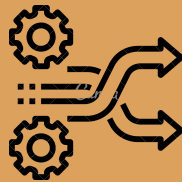
- As a practice in solidarity, we must continue to work across differences (use our differences to fight against common battles)<sup>13</sup>
- Because when we are (and remain) “unaware of [our] own communities’ history of activism and solidarity with Black communities and other communities of color,” we forget the power of solidarity<sup>14</sup>



**Solidarity can make activism and organizing less individualistic, creating vibrant and connected communities and systemic change**

Support is **NOT** transactional, but if we want to be supported (and understood) in our fight against anti-Asian racism, we must do the same and fight for justice for ALL, not just ourselves

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Change

# Anti-Blackness and Me

It's important to acknowledge that we live in a society where **anti-Blackness** is prevalent



It's also important to recognize how anti-Blackness may appear in Chinese spaces, including in discussions, our language (ex. of describing Black folks), culture, and more

- This includes “think[ing] about the ways in which we actually perpetuate racism, specifically against Black communities”<sup>15</sup>
- “We need to talk honestly about our own beliefs about Black people, and the ways we benefit from anti-Black racism in our lives, and the ways we can interrupt this system of oppression”<sup>16</sup>

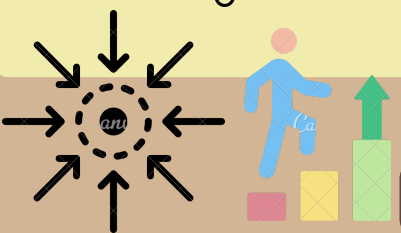


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While the response to addressing anti-Blackness in Chinese communities is oftentimes “**but we face racism too,**” we need to reflect on why it may be hard for us to validate, support, and work to combat other folks’ struggles

- In these moments, why might we feel threatened when highlighting the experiences of others? What deters us from working to address anti-Blackness (including in ourselves, our families, and our communities)?



**By de-centering ourselves and our experiences, we can instead center Blackness**

- This means putting the experiences and perspectives of Black folks at the forefront of our conversations on justice<sup>17</sup>

Throughout this work it's important to remember that:

**“Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground”<sup>18</sup>**

15. Asian American Pacific Islanders for Civic Empowerment (AAPI), 2016, p. 111  
 16. Ibid.  
 17. Tseng, A., 2021  
 18. AAPI, 2016, p. 114



## Showing Up: What Can I Do?

It's important to remember that showing up and standing in solidarity are not **one-time actions**, but things that we **constantly** do. This work can be intimidating, but we can (and must) try and continue showing up

### Some things folks can do this Black History Month (and beyond) to show up for Black folks is to

1. Speak about anti-Blackness in Chinese communities with our friends and families
  - a. You can share these resources as well with friends and family to further your discussions
  - b. [Letters for Black Lives](#) (multilingual resources for people to talk about their Black Lives Matter movement with their families, started by young Asian Americans in 2016)
  - c. [Anti-racist zines](#) (cover a variety of topics regarding solidarity)
2. Commit to learning and unlearning!
  - a. "I will make mistakes and get corrected, and I will receive that as a gift towards my growth"<sup>19</sup>
  - b. Read up about some of the events and figures listed in this resource (and beyond)
  - c. Check Toronto Public Library's [reading lists](#) (includes books, videos, podcasts, and more)
3. Attend events centering Black history in Toronto
  - a. [Dis/Mantle](#) is a free art exhibit held at Spadina Museum inspired by Black abolitionists (on view until May 28)
  - b. Attend Black history events held by [Toronto Public Library](#)
4. Support Black-owned businesses, creators (including on Instagram, Youtube, TikTok, etc), fundraising/crowd-sourcing initiatives, mutual aid funds and/or organizations if you can
  - a. This can include financially or by sharing their work

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19. Mabute-Louie, B. 雷天芯 @beyonkz, 2020

# What else can I do?



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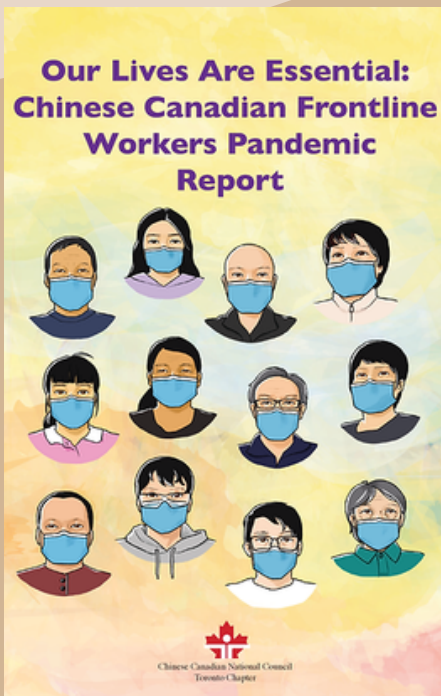


Stay in touch with CCNCTO through **WeChat** or follow us on Instagram @**CCNCTO**

Check out our most recent **2021 anti-Asian racism report** and our **Frontline Workers Pandemic report**

Fill in **this form** to join our volunteer team and support our various organizing, anti-racism, and equity work

- **Talk** to others in your social circles about racism
- **Call out** all levels of racism
- **Share** our **resources** with others
- **Engage** with local community members and organizations to advocate for change





Follow these Instagram accounts that spread awareness on anti-racism and social justice



- **Bianca Mabute-Louie** 雷天芯 [@beyonkz](#) a sociologist and scholar-activist sharing anti-racist content
- **The Conscious Kid** [@theconsciouskid](#) this page supports families and educators in fostering healthy racial identity development and disrupting racism and bias
- **On Canada Project** [@oncanadaproject](#) a page that provides Canadian social justice content
- **Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators** [@onabse\\_org](#) an organization that works to promote equity for African Canadian students, educators, and professionals at all levels in schools
- **Platform** [@platform\\_ca](#) civic leadership for young Black, Indigenous, and racialized women & gender-diverse people
- **Urban Alliance on Race Relations** [@uarrtoronto](#) non-profit organization working to address inequality with educational programs, advocacy & research

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