

ONE VISION ONE VOICE

CHANGING THE ONTARIO CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM
TO BETTER SERVE AFRICAN CANADIANS

A Presentation Facilitated by Kike Ojo
Program Manager, One Vision One Voice



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

Child Welfare System

ONE VISION ONE VOICE: Changing the Child Welfare System for African Canadians

Entry to the System



There are no significant differences in the overall incidence of child maltreatment between Whites and people of African descent. However, professionals and individuals are more likely to report people of African descent than Whites to child welfare.⁴



When a report to child welfare has been made, people of African descent are investigated twice as often as Whites.⁶



Poverty, not the type or severity of maltreatment, is the single most important predictor of placement in foster care and the amount of time spent there.⁵



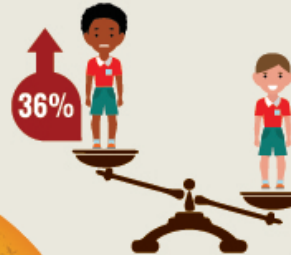
White children who are abused or neglected are twice as likely as children of African descent to receive services in their own homes.⁷

In the System



Children of African descent remain in foster care longer, move more often, receive fewer services, and are less likely to be returned to their home or adopted.⁹

In the System



When an investigation is found to have been substantiated, children of African descent are 36% more likely than White children to be placed into foster care.⁸



Most White children who enter the system are permitted to stay with their families, whereas most children of African descent are taken away from theirs. Child welfare for children of African descent usually means shattering the bonds with their parents.¹⁰

Exiting the System



Children of African descent exit foster care most frequently through adoption or "aging out" of the system. White children exit most frequently through reunification with families.¹¹

Exiting the System

There are a number of negative outcomes for children of African descent who remain in foster and institutional care until they "age out" of the system, including: not completing high school, teen pregnancy, homelessness, unemployment and involvement with the criminal justice system. They also experience isolation from family, culture and community.¹²



Increase in wards

Black foster homes needed

BY CLAUDIO LEWIS

The number of black children becoming wards of the Children's Aid Society is on the steady increase, says Brian McPherson, a social worker with the agency.

He told Contrast during an interview that the bulk of these are new immigrant children, who, in a number of cases, find it difficult to adjust to the Canadian society, and to renew ties with their parents.

McPherson, a West Indian, says that the major problems occur when many of these children join their parents, from whom they have lived apart for many years.

"Some parents leave their children in the islands and come here to better their social and economic position, the children join them after many years, then the parents find out that they cannot be controlled. Some of these children eventually get into trouble with the law and the Children Aid Society has to step in."

"We don't like to take children from their parents. At the Children's Aid Society we believe that the best place for a child is in his own home with his parents. But where it can be proved that the parents can no longer control, provide or care for that child then under the Child Welfare Act, the Children's Aid Society must step in and ensure that the child's needs are catered for."

This increase of children coming under the care of the agency has created a demand for black foster homes in Toronto.

"The Children's Aid Society badly needs black foster homes," McPherson said. "It will be very easy for many of these children to readily identify with foster parents with whom they may share some common background."

"Not that white foster homes are not working out for black kids but in a great number of cases, the agency is finding out that placing a black child in a white home can result in a shocking experience for that child. We have had cases where black kids run away from these homes and stay in social workers' "I don't want to stay in by no white home."

McPherson said that for the longest while the agency has been trying to get black kids in the community to be involved in foster homes but the response has always been disappointing.

"Many of these problems," he said, "can be prevented, if only the immigration department will inform the Children's Aid Society of some of the immigrant children who will be joining their parents, after they have been apart for a long time."

"We can work with these people and reduce these problems. That is what the agency is here for," he concluded.



Photo by Claudio Lewis

A pair of Queens wins, Miss Black Ontario, Diane Fenton, left, sits with Miss Montreal Carnival '76 Judy Joseph, during the fifth annual Spear Magazine Ball.

The Queens were guests of the Spear Magazine staff during the occasion. Miss Montreal travelled to Toronto especially to attend the Ball at the Masonic Temple last Saturday.

Look for it in CONTRAST

Beginning this week in our column Jazz Sundaes, which will feature articles, jazz as well as others who are doing their thing in Toronto's hot spots.

We kick off this column with a splash on Jerry Sarmets, a Nova Scotia boy who has gained an international reputation over the past decade, and has now decided to return home to enrich the entertainment scene.

Beginning also next week will be a series on the successful and not so successful black Martinis who came out of the East Coast a decade ago and have become a force in Toronto. They are doctors, engineers, contractors, big and small businessmen. These folks are together and they are all cousins! So if you touch one of them, brother, you are likely to have a whole army of cousins coming at you.

We call them affectionately, repeat affectionately, the Maritime Mafia. Look for them starting next week in Contrast.

Frankie Perkins shot

Popular Frankie Perkins, aged about 36, was shot on Tuesday night behind the Paramount Hotel on Spadina Ave.

Around 8 p.m. he was taken to the Toronto Western Hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival. There were apparently no

eye-witnesses to the shooting but a large crowd gathered soon after the incident.

The Toronto City Police later confirmed that Ivan Augustus Hood, age 41, of Mississauga, had surrendered to them and is now facing a charge of second degree murder.

We had money at the gates, in the bar and other overheads. We paid the masseur-ers the amount the association could afford."

Asking about the \$20,000 on the CTA received from Waterloo, Holson, a handleader himself said, "It was stipulated by the Waterloo Council that the money not be used for prizes."

1976 Contrast Newspaper

Attempt to establish a black foster parent project

by claudio lewis

A black organization in Toronto is making a serious attempt to establish a black foster parent project to battle the shortage of black foster homes which now exists in Metro.

According to Ed Clarke, Chairman of the Black Resources Information Centre, the centre has already met with the Children's Aid Society and various churches in Toronto and discussed the shortages of the black foster homes.

Immigration decrease linked to rules

There has been a 25 per cent decrease in the number of immigrants entering Canada for the first quarter of this year from the same three months of 1975 the Immigration Department said recently.

Britain and the United States headed the list of countries as sources of immigrants. The movement from Europe to Canada has been declining recently and the figures show a drop to 35 per cent from 42.2 per cent in 1975. There has been an increase to 26.9 per cent from 24.3 per cent from Asia

As a result of those meetings, he said, BRIC established the "Black Foster Home" project, where an up to date registry of black foster homes which are willing to act as foster parents will be maintained.

The move to establish the project resulted from the revelations in the Contrast that the Children's Aid Society were desperately in need of black foster homes, he said.

Social worker, Brian McPherson told Contrast recently that the Children's Aid Society were desperately in need of Black Foster Homes because there was an increase of black children, who were becoming wards of the agency.

He explained that while white foster homes were generally successful with black children, he felt that it would be advantageous for a black child to be in a foster home where he or she could readily identify with their foster parents.

In announcing the establishment of BRIC Foster Home Project, Ed Clarke,



Ed Clarke

former Chairman of the NBCC, said, "There exist a definite social problem with black children who end up in white foster homes."

He said that the problem of adaption for both the child and parent could be very difficult for both black child and white foster parent.

Clarke said that the centre will work closely with the

placement service in the Children's Aid Society. The homes of all volunteers for the project will be visited by trained persons from the project to establish whether they meet standards set by the Children's Aid Society," he said.

Editor's Note: persons interested in becoming black foster parents are asked to call BRIC at 368-0539 or write to Black Foster Parents Project, c.o. Black Resources Information Centre, 167 Church Street, Toronto.

Augustine elected Grenada Association's president

by nancy samuel



Daisy Taylor

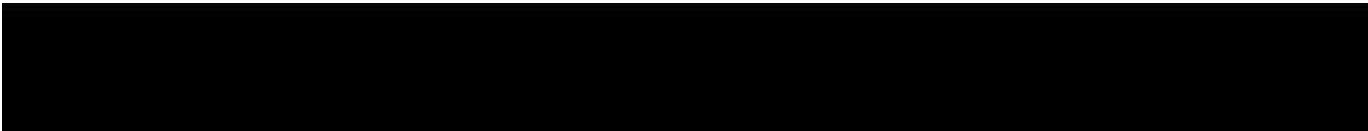
serious nature, so as to cause her to disappear without notifying her family.

The Brantford Police were notified and they are continuing their investigations into the mysterious disappearance.

Our path to sustainable change – OVOV Phase II



It means moving forward with
One Vision One Voice



Phase I: One Vision One Voice

What: Research, including community conversations, exploring the issues.

Why: Reduce the racial disproportionality in child welfare and improve outcomes for African Canadians who come into contact with the system.

Who: Steering Committee of individuals from the African Canadian community.
Reference Group made up of CAS representatives.

How does the work connect to the issues?

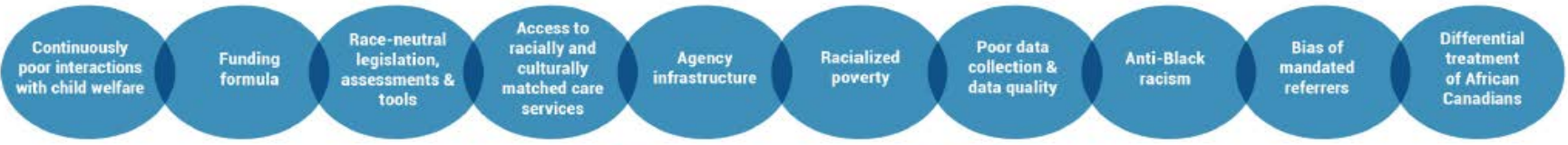


Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies



One Vision One Voice Strategic Map

The Issues



Race Equity Practices



Goal:

The elimination of disproportionality & disparity for African Canadians in child welfare

4 Pillars of Change



How will OVOV impact societies?

Three core areas of work:



Laying the foundation

Developing infrastructure for sustainable change in the sector

- Development and administering of an organizational anti-Black racism needs assessment and society report cards
- Development of society implementation plans to address the findings from the organizational needs assessment
- Creating a provincial African Canadian Service Directory
- Development of tools and templates for practice enhancement



Accountability to the African Canadian community

Embedding accountability and building partnerships with African Canadian communities across the province

- Establishment of an African Canadian child welfare Provincial Advisory Council that will advise OACAS and provide leadership and support and support to local advisory structure
- Establishment of African Canadian Local Advisory Councils
- Engagement of African Canadian affinity groups within the child welfare sector



Knowledge building

Supporting identity based data collection and sector research

- Providing support to societies to collect identity-based data
- Providing best practice evidence around the value in collecting identity based data
- Collecting and sharing field equity research



The Black Community is Not Broken

- Powerful unexamined ideas / dominant narratives about Black people
- Anti-Black Racism is not understood or believed – its process, its impact

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The Historical Context

Canada's history of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism

- Slavery ended in 1834
- "Jim Crow Laws"
- Legalized discrimination
- "Sun Down Towns" i.e., Dresden
- Segregated schools (last school closed, 1965)
- Black townships destroyed and communities disappeared
- Housing discrimination
- 1st race riots in North America - Nova Scotia

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The Immigration System

The Immigration System:

- Points system
- Skilled trades labourers (60s & 70s)
- Domestic Workers (50s & 60s)
- “Barrel-children”

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The Present: A Legacy of Systemic Racism & Anti-Black Racism

- The Racialization of Poverty
- Unemployment, Underemployment and Social Exclusion
- Normalized outcome disparities in all sectors for African Canadians
- Efforts to create change, made by those in the community and within organizations, have been met with harsh consequences

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“Resistance is in our DNA”

Dr. Akua Benjamin

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African Canadian Contributions to a better Ontario for all

African Canadian Contributions to a better Ontario for all:

- Ontario Racial Discrimination Act, 1944
- First Human Rights Code in Canada (in Ontario)
- Changes to Immigration Policy to allow more racialized people into Canada
- Charter of Rights and Freedoms (builds on Human Rights Code)
- Reforms in Policing:
Special Investigations Unit and Public Oversight of Policing

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Today's Contribution: One Vision One Voice

Today's Contribution: One Vision One Voice

- Decades of African Canadian community expressing concerns, lobbying government official and CASs
- Community-led initiative
- Community-based research
- The Recommendations capture the voice of the community and address child welfare practice as well as systemic change

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Engaging the Black Community is a Privilege, Not a Right

- Ally-ship and Advocacy are required
 - Create a relationship of deference with the Black community
 - Create a relationship of accountability with CAS
 - Become well acquainted with OVOV
 - Speak truth to power
- Go beyond inclusion in governance, direction, and leadership – i.e. changing decision-making processes; representation at the table
- Hold an anti-oppressive, anti-Black racism posture

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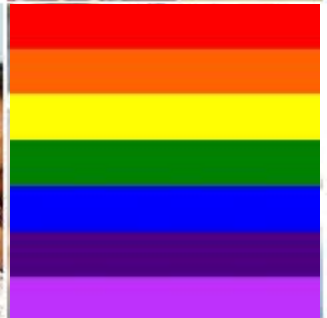


Ensure Full Understanding of Critical Issues

- Stay up to speed with OVOV
- Create opportunities to engage with the community and be in deferential partnership to remain informed
- Be consistently informed by Black service providers
- Always question the source of information and “research”

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Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

THANK YOU