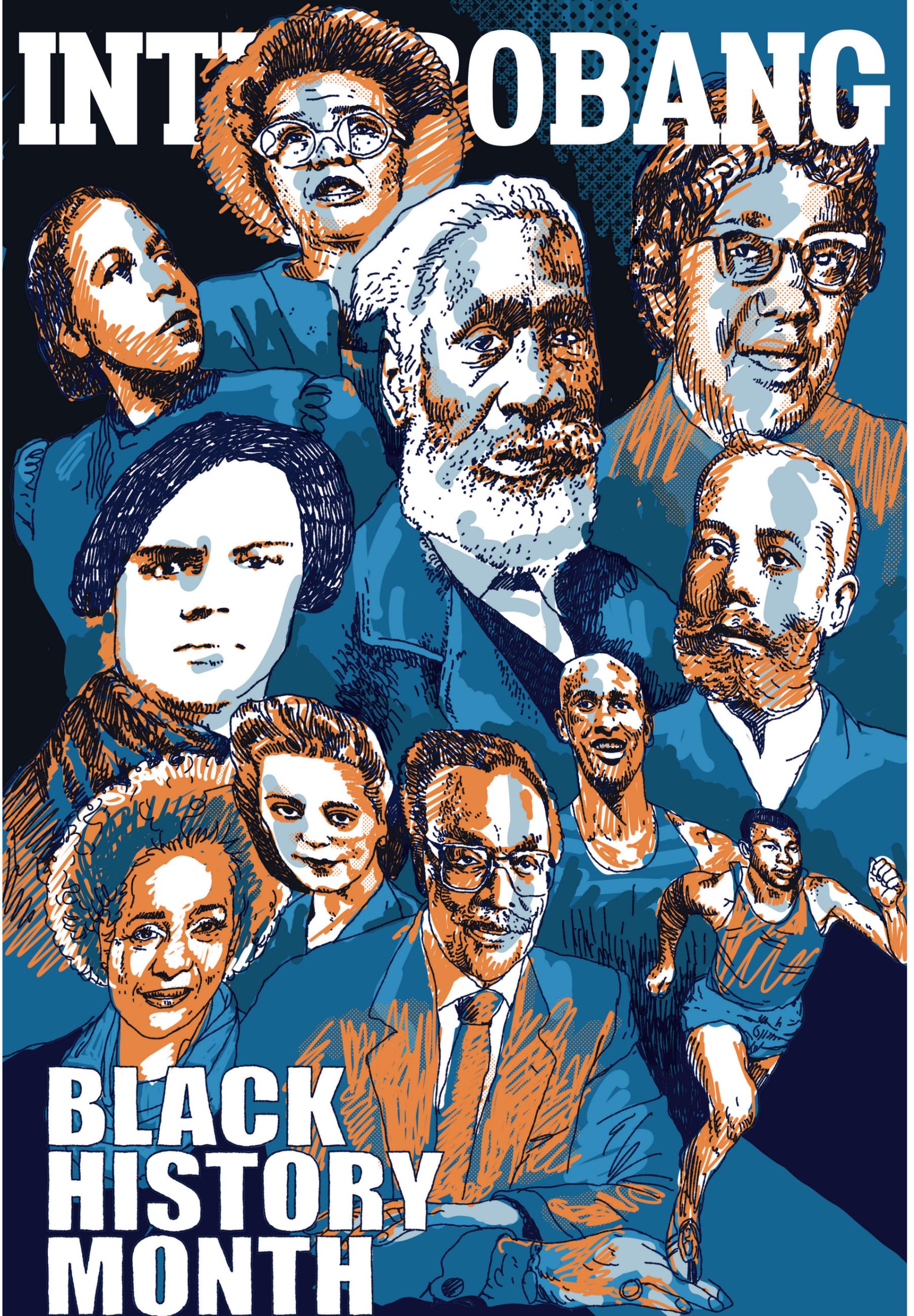


INTERROBANG



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

PAGES 8-15

ian.indiano



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FROM THE EDITOR Hannah Theodore

Dear readers,
Welcome to a very special edition of Interrobang. Our Black History Month issue is comprised of contributions from our team of reporters, as well as submissions sent to us from students at Fanshawe College, Western University and the greater London community.

Black History Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the contributions made by the Black community to the arts, music, writing, culture, sports and science. We do this because all too often, those contributions are overlooked or discredited, despite the long history of Black culture being at the centre of almost everything we consume.

In this paper, you will find poetry, short stories, articles and more that highlight the history of the Black experience, and what it is like to be Black in Canada today. It was not long ago that many of us took the streets in protest of the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Now, it is our duty and responsibility to keep the momentum of fighting anti-Black racism going.

That is what we hope to accomplish with this issue of Interrobang. Thank you to each and every person who took the time to submit their work, thank you to the Black Students' Association at Western University for their continued support, and thank you, readers, for picking up this newspaper and keeping the conversation going.

Happy Black History Month!

Sincerely,

Letters to the Editor: fsuleters@fanshawec.ca

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Friday, March 18, 2022

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Visit fanshawec.ca/rid for more info and project submission details.



Fanshawe staff members “United” in labour appreciation

Amy Simon
INTERROBANG

On Jan. 20, Fanshawe project coordinator Gary Siroen and social media communications officer Sarah Wells were awarded United Way Labour Appreciation Awards.

“I was completely shocked,” said Wells. “I had no idea I was even nominated. I’m such a small part of such an amazing campaign and amazing community at Fanshawe, so to be the one that’s recognized, I was floored.”

The Labour Appreciation Awards recognize union members who help make United Way workplace campaigns successful. With London having the third highest child poverty rate in Canada, the funds raised through these campaigns go to support local agencies helping those to overcome obstacles from homelessness to education barriers.

“These hardworking activists rose above all others and offered hope, optimism, and kindness during these trying times,” reads the United Way website.

Siroen, who has served as the Ontario Public Services Union (OPSEU) Local 109 president since

2013, was recognized for his services “in the trenches” in support of labour activism and local community building. Between the Union and Fanshawe College, the United Way said, “Gary selflessly dedicates himself to helping his fellow members and is always quick to answer questions and support initiatives taking place.”

Wells was also presented the 2021 Labour Appreciation Award by OPSEU Local 109 for her dedication to Fanshawe’s annual campaign as well as the United Way. For Wells, that dedication has stretched over many years.

“My mom worked in the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) for over 20 years,” said Wells. “She always talked about how heartbreaking it was to see kids and families not have the basic necessities to come to school or to live their daily lives.

“Anytime I have the opportunity to support those volunteering initiatives in making sure that people have what they need, that’s something small I can do to help.”

According to the United Way’s 2021 Labour Appreciation Award Winners web page, Wells is described

as “always quick to pitch in when she sees a need and is committed to making an impact in the lives of the people around her.”

From poverty to possibility, the United Way focuses on creating lasting changes in communities all across Canada. In 2020, for the 11th year in a row, the College contributed more than \$100,000 to the United Way.

“They help to make sure that all of our community resources have what they need to operate,” said Wells.

With this year’s campaign taking on a virtual model, Wells said the challenge was finding another way to connect the United Way’s message with students.

“We didn’t know what to expect with a digital campaign. But the community really stepped up and is supporting us beyond our wildest dreams, it’s just amazing to see.”

Reflecting on her award, Wells went on to thank her Fanshawe team.

“This is recognition for Fanshawe as a whole,” said Wells. “Our committee is amazing and the Fanshawe community, for how they step up to support the United Way year after year, is just outstanding. I’m glad to be a tiny part of that.”



CREDIT: SARAH WELLS

Fanshawe College social media communications officer Sarah Wells has been awarded the 2021 United Way Labour Appreciation Award.

Health unit says COVID-19 transmission ‘in the hands of the students’

Sonia Persaud
GAZETTE

London’s health unit said students’ responsibility off-campus will be key to limiting the coronavirus’ spread in anticipation of Western’s upper-year classes returning to in-person learning.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit said in a media briefing on Jan. 27 that “a number of things” are in place at Western University to make the return to campus safer, but the risk of COVID-19 transmission wherever people gather will continue to exist.

Students in undergraduate and graduate level courses returned to campus Jan. 31, though all first-year undergraduate classes will remain online until Feb. 28.

Much of the COVID-19 spread associated with Western occurs off-campus, including at London’s bars and restaurants, according to Dr. Alex Summers, acting medical officer of health for the MLHU.

“The risk on campus can be limited through some of these regulations and interventions, but the risk off campus is harder to control,” Dr. Summers said. “And that’s really, truly in the hands of the students.”

Ontario restaurants, bars, gyms and movie theatres reopened with 50 per cent capacity on Jan. 31 with the private indoor gathering limit increasing to 10 from five.

The MLHU partnered with Western to introduce new safety measures on campus, including upping face covering requirements to medical-grade ASTM level 3 masks.

Western’s residence buildings



CREDIT: AARON L. GREENSPAN (GAZETTE)

Much of the COVID-19 spread associated with Western occurs off-campus, including at London’s bars and restaurants, according to Dr. Alex Summers.

will remain closed until first-year students return in February, pending COVID-19 restrictions. Students in residence were able to submit a request to return early for health reasons, pre-booked travel arrangements, extraordinary

personal circumstances or if they’re enrolled in upper-year courses.

Infection and hospitalization rates are much higher than they were during the pandemic’s “quiet phases,” said London Mayor Ed Holder at the briefing.

“As students return to in-person learning in our community, it is critical that they also recognize that they are still working and living through a pandemic and that their social activities are also a critical part of COVID-19 transmission

risk,” Dr. Summers said.

Western’s vaccination clinic is open weekdays for staff and students over the age of 18 to book a first, second or booster dose. Walk-ins may also be accepted, pending vaccine supply.

Academics and industry together in a new model created by Fanshawe Global and a Chilean university

Ana Lustosa
INTERROBANG

Fanshawe Global is looking back on the success of a recent collaboration with a Chilean university.

A new business model based on joining academics, business, and industry leaders was implemented in Universidad de Los Lagos (ULAGOS) in Chile after an exchange of knowledge and consultancy services from Fanshawe Global, a subsidiary of Fanshawe College.

Among the outcomes from the project, that started on Jan. 21, 2021, there has been development of a link between education and technical careers that permit improvement training. It can happen through internships, collaborative work for innovation, and technology transfer.

The end of the project will happen this year with the implementation of a forum titled *Successfully leading in the education sector: strategic management competencies, service culture, and key relationship management*.

“The work our team does contributes to Strategic Goal Number Four of the college, which is to build complimentary sources of alternative revenue,” said Candace Miller, director of strategic initiatives and business development at Fanshawe College. “Our team worked with the faculty and leadership team at the institution as opposed to the students. However, we did share best practices from Fanshawe around our cooperative education program and services.”

Conducted online, the program has impacted 50 key educational leaders and faculty in ULAGOS.

“This project has left us with a comprehensive plan that contains all the necessary elements to ensure the development of technical careers in permanent coexistence with the productive sectors,” said Danilo Curumilla, director of the Technical Institute of ULAGOS in a media release.

According to Miller, the initiative included a panel of co-op students sharing their experiences and co-op placements with ULAGOS.

“The students gained a global outlook from this experience which is

directly connected with Fanshawe’s mission,” said Miller.

During the program ceremony launch last year, Curumilla emphasized the importance of employability.

“The main factor to consider in the offer of technical careers at our university and from that point of view, a practical training process linked to the regional reality is essential to ensure a rapid and adequate labour insertion of our future technicians and professionals,” said Curumilla.

Fanshawe Global

Using its expertise, Fanshawe Global is a subsidiary of Fanshawe College that provides corporate solutions and customized training to converge the goals and needs of education and business.

The partnership between Fanshawe Global and other institutions, focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, embraces different sectors besides education, such as healthcare, agriculture, and aviation.

On Jan. 28, Fanshawe Global, in partnership with NorQuest College in Alberta and Northern Lights College in British Columbia was



CREDIT: FANSHAWE GLOBAL VIA TWITTER.COM

A new business model based on joining academics, business, and industry leaders was implemented in Universidad de Los Lagos (ULAGOS) in Chile after an exchange of knowledge and consultancy services from Fanshawe Global

awarded an international project called Young Africa Works in Kenya.

Among the services, there are online courses available in English and Spanish language, and free webinars. In addition, Fanshawe Global offers Micro-Certification (MC), considered one of the newest in digital transformation and education, in which one demonstrates proficiency in a particular skill in a condensed program.

The MC model includes

recognition of completion via a digital badge and electronic certificate, 100 hours of training (per MC), and self-directed online learning.

Nowadays, the subsidiary is working on projects in Peru, Colombia, and Kenya, aside from Chile. In Mexico, for example, Fanshawe Global is working with different companies to offer communities where female students can access mentorship, employment services, and other academic supports. This project will conclude this year.

W.E.A.N.: Connecting Black students to community and scholarship opportunities

Hannah Theodore
INTERROBANG

Pastor Sandie Thomas has had many roles throughout her life: a paralegal nurse, a special needs worker, a teacher, a principal, and a grandmother just to name a few. She calls herself “a jade of all trades,” and it’s an apt title. Today, she is the Director of Public Relations for the Congress of Black Women (London Chapter) and the founder of W.E.A.N. (Where We Are Now) Community Centre.

An impressive and inspiring work history to say the least, but that’s not how Thomas describes it.

“You say, ‘what’s your bio? What do you do?’ Nothing. I just help people,” she said.

Located at 717 Richmond Street, just south of Oxford, W.E.A.N. strives “to serve all members of the community with a focus on supporting and empowering the Black and marginalized communities by creating initiatives for equal opportunity and equal access to well-being, spiritual health and personal economic prosperity.”

Of the many services offered through W.E.A.N. and the Congress of Black Women, scholarship opportunities are available for Black students at both Fanshawe College and Western University.

Thomas highlighted the Kathleen (Kay) Livingstone Award, the Gwen Jenkins Scholarship and the Yaphet Robinson Human Equality Award.

“Kay Livingstone is the founder of the Congress of Black Women,” explained Thomas. “And this award, it is to remember what she has done for social justices for

individuals. In 1992, the London Branch established the Kay Livingstone scholarship in her memory.”

The Kay Livingstone scholarship is worth \$1,000 and is offered to Afro-Canadian students from the London-Middlesex area, who meet the selection criteria. Candidates must provide evidence of academic excellence, community involvement, and financial need.

The Gwen Jenkins Scholarship honours the late Gwen Jenkins, who was the founding president of the Congress of Black Women’s London Chapter and is offered to mature students who meet the right criteria. The Yaphet Robinson Human Equality Award specifically rewards students with a focus on human rights and community service.

“This award is...for the extraordinary services that someone will do in our community here in London, towards the further end of the human rights, and this award is given annually,” said Thomas.

Scholarship applications are not yet open, but students are encouraged to visit london.cbwc-ontario.org as well as their respective institutions scholarship sites for more information.

For Thomas, giving newcomers to London the groundwork to feel comfortable is what makes the work she does at W.E.A.N. so meaningful. The scholarship opportunities offered through the Congress of Black Women is just one way she’s making the lives of Black and immigrant students easier.

“An island needs things in order to be an island,” said Thomas. “There’s grass, there’s trees, there’s the sun to give the trees what they need. Everything has to work together in order



CREDIT: ADRIAN BROOKS

The new Black Public Library located at W.E.A.N. Community Centre, 717 Richmond Street.

to be successful. So even an island, it’s not all on its own. And so, with this scholarship, we are partnering up with Fanshawe and with Western to make sure that when students are coming in, they have the necessary tools to make sure they’re successful, not just for one year, but they’re successful through their journey, while they’re here to get their education.”

As Black History Month begins, Thomas also provided a reminder as to why it is important that Black and

immigrant community members get the supports they need.

“It’s because of the disadvantages that has been taken because of systemic racism, the oppression that has been placed on a particular minority or particular group,” she said. “And now we want to flesh that out, and let people understand that there’s a safe space that we all belong. And so yes, unfortunately, we should be just focusing on the human race. I agree, 110 per cent. But because of these disadvantages that have been taken

on a particular group. We’re focusing on the Black community, we have to make sure that they come into a space [where] they can thrive.”

Offering Black Londoners a place to thrive is exactly what Thomas does daily at W.E.A.N. On Feb. 1, W.E.A.N. opened a Black Public Library at the Community Centre and Thomas said that even more scholarship opportunities are in the works. To learn more about W.E.A.N., visit weancommunitycentre.com.

Off the Radar: What's going on in the world

Ian Indiano
INTERROBANG

Black History Month reminds us that to improve our society, it is necessary to pay attention to what is going on beyond our bubbles. The world is vast, and plural, and complex, and it requires constant examination and analysis. We must remember that beyond North America, there is a whole universe of cultural and political manifestations, and to remain open to it is essential if we want to build a fair and better world for the future.

Here are five news stories from around the world you should be paying attention to:

Chinese New Year

Feb. 1 marked the Chinese New Year 2022. Also known as the Lunar New Year, the rise of the second new moon after the winter establishes its beginning, which can be on any date between Jan. 21 and Feb. 20. For the most important date of the Chinese calendar, celebrations last for two weeks, ending on Feb. 15 with the lantern festival. According to the Chinese zodiac, this is the Year of the Tiger, and its element is water. A Water Tiger year occurs every 60 years, and it symbolizes strength, exorcising evils and braveness.

Honduras' first female president

Xiomara Castro has become the first female president of the South American country of Honduras. Her husband, Manuel Zelaya, was the president between 2006 and 2009, when he was

ousted by a coup. This is the third time Castro ran for office. In her first year, the leftist leader will have to deal with a political crisis and said, "my government will not continue the maelstrom of looting that has condemned generations of young people to pay the debt they incurred behind their back." Her election puts an end to the 12-year reign of the right-wing National Party, that was marked by corruption and scandals.

North Korea missile tests

The Asian country has conducted its biggest test launch since 2017. This is the seventh test this month, and it was condemned by Japan, South Korea and the US. The missile reached an altitude of 2,000km and it came down in the Sea of Japan. Although North Korea has been prohibited from ballistic and nuclear weapons tests by the United Nations (and has faced strict sanctions by it) the country regularly defies the ban. The test was viewed as a political sign of strength, considering the timing, which is right before the Winter Olympics in China, and ahead of the South Korean presidential election in March.

Cuba charging anti-government protestors

The protest in Cuba last July was the largest in decades. Thousands of protestors went to the streets to protest the government handling of the pandemic, price increases and medicine shortages. The Cuban government blames US sanctions for the problems that started the protests and suggested that those demonstrations were financed by



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CREDIT: IAN INDIANO

Here are five news stories from around the world you should be paying attention to.

US-based groups. Cuban officials said 172 people have been tried and convicted, but 710 people are being held in detentions as they await trials. The protests were largely peaceful, and activists have criticized the trials as unfair and disproportionate.

Guatemala convicts ex-officials for violating Indigenous women

The highest court in Guatemala has sentenced five ex-soldiers to 30 years in prison for raping dozens of Indigenous women during the 1980s. The former paramilitaries were members of the so-called Civil Self-Defence Patrols, armed guerrillas formed and supported by the military. The 36 Maya women victims were aged 12-52 at the time.

The three-week trial included testimony from survivors and relatives of the victims. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala said "this sentence is a landmark advance in the access to the rights to truth, justice and reparation for female victims of sexual violence during the war" that happened between 1960-1996.

Museum London purchases Fanshawe professor's work for permanent display

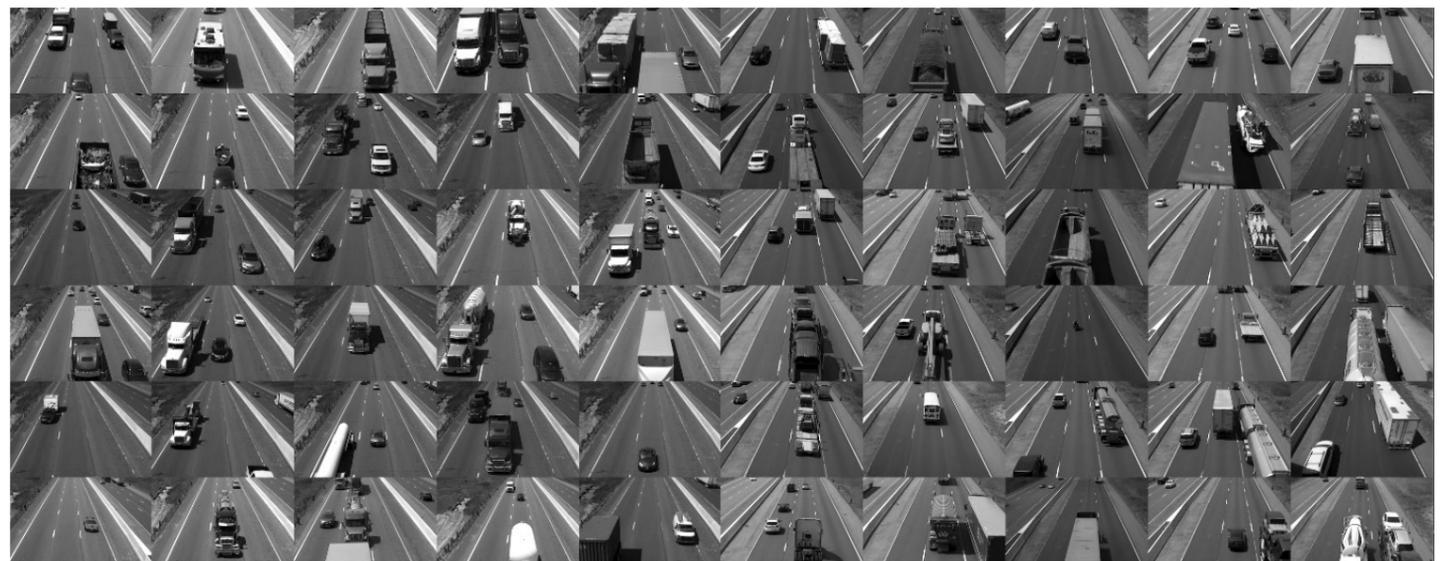
Aisha Javaid
INTERROBANG

Artist and Fanshawe College Fine Arts Professor, Gary Spearin has reinvented an iconic painting done by Jack Chambers in 1968. His work, *401:EXIT232: East and West* was unveiled at the Woodstock Art Gallery and has now been purchased by Museum London as part of their permanent collection.

Spearin had recreated Chambers' painting of Exit 232 near Woodstock, Ont. off Highway 401.

"This work was created with historic work in mind," said Spearin. "The painting by Jack Chambers in 1968/1969 was that same bridge in Woodstock off of the highway. So, the main reason I chose to make this my artwork was because I wanted to relate it to that historical aspect. Also, being a London artist and recreating a famous Canadian painting sort of updates that I suppose. But I also think that the photographic work feels like the contemporary situation of today, of the highway. The highway being a lot more overwhelming, a lot more noise. And definitely, an endless flow of river like traffic that just keeps going on, which it didn't in the 60s."

Spearin further explained that his art piece may have persuaded Museum London because of the local aspect of it. In addition, Spearin felt



CREDIT: GARY SPEARIN

401EXIT232: East and West. Digital print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Bright White 308gsm paper mounted on aluminum 40 x 100in /101.6 x 254cm (2panels each 40 x 50in 101.6 x 107cm), 2018. Collection of: Museum London

that it was important for local artists to take advantage of art galleries and artists within their surroundings.

"Museum London purchased this work, and it was originally displayed in Woodstock in 2018 at a show, which again, was there on purpose because it was to acknowledge the bridge and the original painting by Chambers. So, having that local knowledge or for an audience, seeing an exhibition, having that local experience, reiterated, or presented it in a different way in the art gallery kind

of gives people an advantage when they're looking at their work."

Appropriately, the work will now call London home.

"So yeah, having that local aspect certainly probably ignited Museum London, as well as the historic aspect of Chambers' painting. All of those things are important to London, London's art community," said Spearin.

Past images have always been inspiring and been of great interest to Spearin. His fascination with

historic artwork is what leads him to recreate previous art.

"Chambers' painting is something I've known about for years. I would drive on that highway and kind of search the viewpoint from the original painting. I kept thinking where is this place? So finally, I looked closer and found where it was. So that was an interest of mine, and in the past, artworks of mine have dealt with historical artists and where they've been especially more locally."

Moreover, Spearin said that incorporating a variety of qualities from our daily lives into a piece work enhances the artistic nature of it.

"These past images have been inspiring, also with this piece, the highway is used all the time. It's a part of our daily life and infrastructure as well as the economy and politics. With all that in mind, I felt that it was kind of important to bring all those things together and make a work that acknowledges all those aspects."

Mapping racial terminology from Brazil to Canada

Ana Lustosa
INTERROBANG

I am white, and my half-sister is Black. For me, that does not matter. However, even in my home country of Brazil, where there are millions of mixed-race families, people sometimes ask bizarre questions. But I perceive these questions as having a hidden message. For example, one comment on a photo I posted on social media of me and my sister read, “do you have a Black sister?” as though that was a surprise.

My sister considers herself Black but her colour can be called “pardo,” a Brazilian term meaning “between white and Black.” Why? Because her mom is Black, and our father is white. It is a personal, and at the same time, sensible term to use. The topic of what term to use when describing mixed-race Brazilians is so prevalent that it even came up in a recent episode of *Big Brother Brazil*.

One of the participants asked a Black colleague what term they preferred, and they explained that the decision is made on an individual level. The type of discussion may seem simple, but it shows the need to discuss racial terms.

According to the latest Brazilian research about race, 46.8 per cent of Brazilians identified as “pardo,” 42.7 per cent identified as white, and 9.4 per cent identified as Black. It is important to clarify that only the individual has the authority to say which colour/race they belong to.

Slavery, immigration, colonization, and globalization are just some of the many things that explain this junction between groups. For instance, four million African slaves were shipped to Brazil between 1501 and 1900, according to rates from The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database. It means Brazilians have some cultural, racial, and historical aspects strongly associated with Africans. It makes up part of Brazil’s history.



CREDIT: COURTESY OF ANA LUSTOSA

Mixed race families are common in Brazil, yet questions of terminology and racism still linger.

Unfortunately, this also meant that Black people were subject to the same racism faced across the Americas. Today the mentality around calling someone “pardo” or Black is changing, but there is a long way still to go.

In Canada, the term “Black” has been among the population groups mentioned on the Census since 1996. In the questionnaire, there are groups as South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.), Chinese,

Latin American, Arab, Japanese, Filipino, and so on. In the 2016 Census, 12 per cent of the Black population choose “white” and “Black” when filling out the survey.

Nowadays, the Black population represents 3.5 per cent of Canada’s population (Statistics Canada). As time goes by, more precisely by 2036, the projection is that the same group will increase to about 5.6 per cent of the population.

All non-Black people must be aware of this discussion. It is not only about terminology. If you think that a name can be offensive, do not use it. If you have questions about a person’s identity, ask. Someone’s race carries their history, where they came from, and who they are, and we all have a duty to respect that.

Appropriation vs. appreciation: A culture is nothing without its people

Dee-Dee Samuels
INTERROBANG

Black History Month is an acknowledgment and celebration of the contributions that Black culture has made to society, not just in Canada, but in countries all over the world. Contributions that have unfortunately become a neglected part of the national narrative and even absorbed silently into Western society without recognition.

This month is a fresh reminder to take stock of the beauty and depth in the arts, sciences and politics that Black culture has infused into our everyday lives, and to spotlight those offerings.

The way we look at freedom, the way we dress, even the music we listen to (whether it be hip-hop, R&B, country, or rock n’ roll), all have their roots firmly planted in Black culture; this is probably something we don’t, but should, give a second thought to.

While taking stock of all these treasures, we must be conscious and discerning about where the line between appreciation and appropriation is drawn. We must consider that having to remind a society that is drenched in Black culture, yet still struggles to acknowledge its origins, is triggering to say the least. The truth is that a culture is nothing without its people. It’s the people we honour or don’t honour. It is the people we weaken or empower.

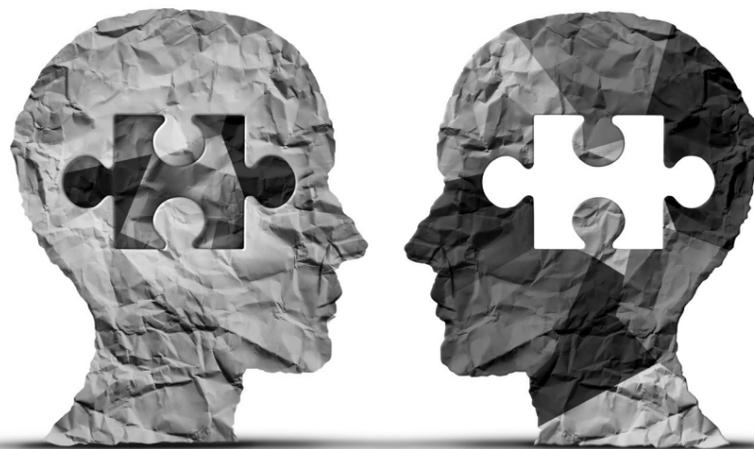
Appreciation vs. appropriation points to remember

Example of appropriation: Fashion brands that frequently cherry pick items/clothing that have a spiritual or cultural significance and disrespect their importance to sell clothes, taking traditional clothing and making it into a costume or an accessory. This can feel like an insult because it is.

Example of appreciation: When a Western brand (or an individual) is inspired by a hairstyle, clothing or even a musical sound of a culture and finds a way to contribute or give back to that culture. One way to do this is to educate yourself about the culture’s origins. Fashion brands should choose models in their advertisements that represent that culture. For individuals who adopt certain hairstyles, styles of clothing or music, it is respectful to have an understanding of their origins.

The conversation about appreciation vs. appropriation should be a nuanced dialogue, involving more questions than answers. The beauty of Western societies is they are a melting pot of cultures, where we get to learn from one another and grow together. When it becomes obvious that one sector of society isn’t reaping the benefits of what it is obviously offering to the beautification of society, then we are headed in the wrong direction.

Black History Month is a celebration of the Black culture embedded in our everyday lives.



CREDIT: WILDPixel

This month is a fresh reminder to take stock of the beauty and depth in the arts, sciences and politics that Black culture has infused into our everyday lives, and to spotlight those offerings.

It is a time to celebrate, acknowledge and contribute to the empowering of community that has given so much and has been given, historically, so little. February is an important opportunity to also observe where appropriation and systemic

racism persists and give visibility to the ways we can support those who are promoting change. Diversity is what makes us stronger and is something we should all reap the benefits of. When the level of the water raises all the ships rise.

The end of racism?



Michael Veenema
RELIGION

What is racism? Oxfordreference.com defines it as “the inability or refusal to recognize the rights, needs, dignity, or value of people of particular races or geographical origins. More widely, the devaluation of various traits of character or intelligence as ‘typical’ of particular peoples.”

According to this definition, at the heart of racism are three problems. The first is inability – “the inability to recognize the rights, needs, dignity or value of people...” The second is refusal – “the refusal to recognize...” And the third is devaluation – “the devaluation of various traits of character or intelligence...”

It is thought that we can deal with these three problems. We can deal with inability by, for example, encouraging people to interact with people of different races, of different geographical regions, or (we could add) of different cultures. The more we come to know people who are “different,” the greater our ability to escape racist attitudes.

Dealing with refusal can be more difficult. Refusal implies a willful act. And dealing with a willful act might require stronger measures than creating opportunities for interaction. Seeing that some people apparently *refuse* to stop making racist comments or gestures tempts other people to force them to change by means of *power*. This includes especially the passing of laws, but also the shouting down of people at gatherings such as this week’s trucker-led rally in Ottawa, or outing people on social media.

Dealing with devaluation suggests other strategies, especially I think, education. It is very common for people who take pride in the achievements of their own nation, for example, to find the people of other nations not measuring up. Western European nations, for example, take pride in their highly developed fine arts: theatre, visual art, and classical music. Americans are proud of the strong educational-research-technological complex they have developed in just two and half centuries (coming up). Archaeological finds in Egypt and China contribute to a sense of resilience



CREDIT: FPM

The Tree of Life first appears in the opening pages of the Bible. Not much is said about it, but its name sounds promising.

over thousands of years for the people of those nations. When people of one nation become educated about, not only the successes of their own nation, but also the achievements of others, they typically value their global neighbours more highly.

The Christian tradition that I have found crucial for life has its own ways of limiting racism. First, *The Book* of the Christian faith, a collection called The Bible, contains the voices of people of many nations living in the areas in which it was written.

First of all, voices of the Jewish people. The Bible is not a collection written by Christians. It is Jewish through and through. Its first sections were written by and for Jewish people set free from Egyptian (ancient, not modern Egypt) slavery. But later in the writings, Egypt is the home of a Jewish community which, for a time, shelters the young Jesus while the authorities are on the hunt for him and his family.

Biblical Jewish prophets and leaders are frequently in conflict with the local war lords and imperialist powers around them. But in the text this sometimes gives way to appreciative interactions, such as when Cyrus the Great of the Babylonian Empire orders the rebuilding of the sacred city of the Jews, Jerusalem. He does so because the God of the Jews moves him to.

Years later, after the mission of Jesus Christ had been completed, the early church got off to an explosive start. How did this happen? It happened in part when people from all over the Roman-known world – essentially what we would call southern Europe, the Middle East, and northern Africa – converged on Jerusalem for a Jewish feast and left after hearing the account of Jesus in their own languages.

And in the final pages of the Bible there is a remarkable vision which involves the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life first appears

in the opening pages of the Bible. Not much is said about it, but its name sounds promising. It appears again at the end of the Bible. There, it is noteworthy for its size and abundance. It appears to straddle a mighty river and bears 12 kinds of fruit. But most importantly, its leaves are the for *the healing of the nations* (Revelation 22). Not the destruction of the nations, not the diminishing of the nations, but the healing of the nations. And this fits very nicely with the promise that God made to Abraham, the first and greatest ancestor of the Jewish nation and faith. God would make him – and his offspring – a blessing to “all the nations of the earth” (Genesis 12).

I was going to end with comment about the biblical passages that are explicit in their demand to treat or neighbour as we would want to be treated. That obviously has implications with respect to racism. But I seem to have run out of space.

Return to campus is important, but we need accommodations

Editorial Board GAZETTE

While the idea of returning to on-campus classes is an important educational step for many students, the return to campus plan fails to account for the safety and success of many more vulnerable students.

In-person classes at Western University resumed Jan. 31 for upper-year and graduate courses, while first-year students will continue online learning until residence capacity limits lift in late February.

There’s no denying that students are burned out from nearly two years of locking down and returning to class. The quality of education of in-person classes is much higher for many students. It offers the

opportunity for collaboration, face-to-face interaction and staying after class to ask questions.

Being online has been isolating for many people — bringing classes back to in-person learning could be highly beneficial for student mental health. There’s also only so long that students are willing to pay full price for tuition when their education is entirely Zoom-based.

That being said, the return to campus plan has left a lot to be desired.

There are questions left unanswered about student safety. While the return to in-person class is exciting for most, the lack of a hybrid option for classes means disabled and immunocompromised students have to make decisions that could put their educational future – and even life – in danger.

Many classes at Western have a large participation component that could be detrimental to students’ grades if they are unable to attend due to illness. If we want to keep students safe and prevent them from coming to class while sick, then students should have the option to supplement participation components with an alternative assignment or remove them altogether.

In order to have a safe, successful second semester, accommodations need to be made. Students need to have access to hybrid models and the ability to stay home when they are sick without academic repercussions.

It’s the right move to go back to in-person classes. But in order for it to be the right move for everyone, Western needs to be flexible to account for both student health and student experience.



CREDIT: GAZETTE STAFF (GAZETTE)

Photo from a closed Western in Feb. 6, 2019 due to heavy snowfall.



HAVE AN OPINION? SUBMIT YOUR STORY!
Letters to the Editor: fsuleters@fanshawec.ca

Black
History
Month

A NOTE FROM THE WESTERN UNIVERSITY BLACK STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Madison Milanczak & Ezinne Ndukwe — BSA Co-Presidents 2021/22

The Black Students' Association (BSA) at Western University presents our edition of Black History Month which is themed "Renaissance." The Black Students' Association is a sociopolitical club at Western University dedicated to improving the experience of Black students at a predominantly white institution.

Renaissance signals the revival of Black art, projects, and prosperity. Throughout the month, BSA Western will be highlighting Black talent within London and across Canada. Black people have pioneered the music, art, and literature acclaimed today. Often Black artists go uncredited for setting the foundation for popular arts, such as the founding of Rock n' Roll.

Black people have and continue to be trendsetters, spearheading change within every sphere imaginable. Whether it be political revolutions, technological innovations, or academia, BSA strives to highlight this impeccable work seen throughout the Black Diaspora.

We encourage everyone to take this February to research, reflect, and engage with Black History Month programming. Let's highlight the past achievements and future innovations that were made possible by the power of the people.

Happy Black History Month!

Artwork by Jacob Lawrence



Black
History
Month

A NOTE FROM THE FANSHAWE COLLEGE DIRECTOR OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Joseph Pazzano

I am often asked what equity, diversity, and inclusion means to me. I've been reflecting on this question, and I've been having trouble arriving at a simple answer. It is the hard work of dismantling systems of oppression that have become embedded in every facet of our lives. It is the joyful work of coming together in the spirit of community. It is the patient work of recognizing that the work of today may pay its dividends only years into the future. But it is also not new work. It is work that is rooted in the lessons of history, in the lessons we must glean from folks who engaged in their own patient but determined work of strategizing, agitating, and pushing for change.

To me, this is what Black History Month is about.

Black history is James Jenkins, a Londoner whose work of building community and organizing against discrimination led to the creation of the Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People. Black history is Marsha P. Johnson, the transgender activist who forced a turning point in trans and queer justice at Stonewall, just as Black queer and trans Canadians were at the forefront of protests against anti-queer and trans police violence. Black history is the poets, artists, writers, educators, scientists, business owners and others who have been at the forefront not just of the movements for racial justice but also disability justice, immigration justice, and 2SLGBTQIA+ justice.

In all of those path-breakers, we see models for action. We see folks who didn't label their work as equity and inclusion work but fought to remove barriers and lay the foundation for change. Black History Months shows us that equity and inclusion work is generations in the making.

This Black History Month, I am hopeful. I am hopeful because of the energy that Fanshawe students and members of our broader communities bring to this work, a small sampling of which is showcased in the pages of this important edition of the Interrobang. And I am hopeful together we can harness the power of collective action to bring forth to today the lessons of social justice and community organizing that only Black History Month can reveal to us.

Black
History
Month

A BRIEF HISTORY ON THE HYPER-SEXUALIZATION OF BLACK WOMEN

Daniela Medina

The fact that Black women are substantially more sexualized than their white counterparts is not hidden in Western society; we see it all the time in the media, which often associates white women with purity and Black women with a promiscuous nature. But have you ever wondered why industries like Hollywood find it more profitable to market Black women in a hyper-sexualized way? This is the outcome of another long-standing problem stemming from racism that dates back to colonial times.

To fully comprehend an issue that has been going on for centuries, we must first learn about its origins and how it continues to disproportionately affect Black women. Before Europeans even travelled to Africa, they had already formed an erotic narrative about African people from imperialist travelers (McClintock, 2001). This false notion already embedded in the minds of Europeans enabled the distortion of events they observed once they arrived in Africa. When Europeans arrived and saw African people's practices, such as tribal dances and wearing minimal clothing due to the hot environment, they concluded these factors had something to do with African people being sexually lewd. These misconceptions about African people being "less evolved" and having inferior sexual natures were taken as facts, allowing slavery to be justified for centuries to come (Holmes, 2016).

The term "Jezebel" refers to a colonial idea that African women were extremely sexually promiscuous. Slave owners used the concept that Black women had an insatiable sexual drive to justify their awful crimes over the centuries of enslavement. Slave owners were able to expand their empires by raping Black women because the law at the time held that children of enslaved women were also the property of the white master. Unjustifiable acts like these were completely disregarded during the

slave era because the laws did not treat Black people as human beings. Because Black women were repeatedly taken advantage of by their owners, they were often pregnant which contributed to the stereotype of Black women being sexually insatiable (The Historical Roots of the Sexualization of Black Women, 2019).

Meanwhile, Black women were auctioned off wearing little to no clothing so that bidders could inspect their reproductive parts in case they weren't suitable for reproduction. When compared to how white women were dressed and behaved at the time, this was a startling contrast. White women were courted and dressed modestly. Despite the fact that slavery was abolished, this dangerous perception of Black women persisted in the media, which depicted Black women and girls with large breasts and buttocks. Some of the memorabilia even portrays Black children in sexual poses, with over-developed breasts and genitalia that are barely covered. For generations, the assumption that Black bodies were more sexually vulgar than white bodies found its way into the media, reinforcing this hurtful stereotype. As a result, a disproportionate number of young Black women have been targeted and sexually abused for years (The Historical Roots of the Sexualization of Black Women, 2019).

The image of Black women being referred to as Jezebels was perpetuated in pop culture and movies, and the media and Hollywood continue to hypersexualize and profit from young Black bodies to this day. The negative portrayal of Black women in society has not been subtle, and it is an issue that continues to exist in many industries that are exposed to young minds. Even though it is now 2022, these dangerous stereotypes are still an issue, and by having an open discussion about them, we can begin to undo some of the harm that has been done for the next generation of young Black women.



Black History Month

ARE THEY ENTITLED TO MY OPINION?

Roshawnah Forde

Picture this: you're sitting in a lecture and your professor is lecturing on this week's special topic focused on diversity. The lecture is rooted in deconstructing systemic issues, which then concentrates on "the systemic injustices perpetrated against the Black community." Like most of your classes, you are the only Black student out of a handful of racialized students in your program, and you start to feel the eyes on you. As your professor begins to outline the data regarding various facets of life, the results are grim. All the data is pointing towards vast disparities in socioeconomic success, health, and education among others, compared to their white counterparts. And just like that, the discomfort in the room is palpable; the feeling of your white classmates staring at you intensifies with each pitiful sigh they utter from hearing the discrimination and brutalities initiated and/or perpetuated by some of their ancestors. Then, to your dismay, the discussion portion of the lecture begins.

This dreaded discussion is usually kicked off by questioning, "Why in 2022 do these issues persist?" to which the professor always finishes that statement by looking at YOU.

YOU, the sole Black student in the class.

YOU, whose community is being negatively reflected in the data in disproportionate numbers.

And YOU, who must sit there and hear your classmates' comments dismissing, undervaluing, and disparaging the efforts or "lack thereof" (in their opinion), the Black community employs to close the gap of disparities.

They all look to you to provide them with the answer, essentially asking for you to provide them with the reasons that YOU can, but so many others in your community cannot.

And to that, I say, no. They are not entitled.

They are not entitled to my experience. They are not entitled to the generational trauma that I biologically hold within me as a descendent of those oppressed before. NO, they are not entitled to the emotional labour that it would take me to educate them.

Rejecting that false sense of entitlement, they exert over me, by expecting me to educate them on Black issues is no small feat, nor is it required. So as Maxine Walters would say, "I'm reclaiming my time," and unless I intrinsically feel called to share, my opinion is my privilege. My classmates are not entitled to my experiences by virtue of being in my presence during class. I now recognize the gift that it is to have a voice in spaces where my ancestors couldn't, and I now know the value of my voice, and sharing my experiences is not always up for conversation. Only in spaces where the emotional labour I employ can add perspective to a conversation without requiring that I also educate and build the framework of knowledge for my white colleagues from the ground up, will I feel comfortable enough to share my opinion. Because, my experiences are rich in value and ancestral knowledge, and they are not entitled to my opinion.

Black
History
Month

A COLLECTION OF POEMS

SERENITY

Rashidi Kabama

INTRODUCTION

This poem was dedicated to my struggles with mental health due to my personal financial circumstances. Depression, anxiety, etc. all surrounded me and tried to get me to fold under pressure but I began writing poems in order to cope with the pain. Therefore, I was able to find light in the darkness and keep going. Life is about endurance, perseverance, grit, and grinding. Without struggles, hardships and adversities, we can't build patience and long suffering. Patience and fortitude are the abilities to endure pain without complaining, murmuring, or feeling despondent. As a result, instead of dying, I live, I survive, I thrive, and I breathe, I breathe!

Breathe just breathe
Feel light like the leaves

Breathe, just breathe
Hill, Grass, and the Trees

Breathe, just Breathe
Now listen to my story (X2)

Have to relax, life brings stress
Adversity trials to put you to the test

Depression, sadness all in your chest
Living life full of curses, not feeling blessed

Thinking to yourself you have no worth
What's the purpose of being on this Earth

But it's okay, you lived another day
Get on your knees, have to just pray

Thank God, God, God
That you're alive, that you're alive
That today you live and won't die

BLACK NOISE: A FEW POEMS RECOUNTING MY EXPERIENCE

Tega Aror

Routine

under the blue light
of the night shift
at the emergency room

my cot drifts in the hallway
beside the nurse's hub.
I lie reeling

my arm peppered
with failed attempts
at an IV.

after some time, a Sickle Cell
patient's veins are hard
to find

and my wails
become the Black Noise
of a low priority.

Birthday Candles

On the night of my twenty first birthday,
I took a pick to my hair, ironed my concert dress
and had my mom snap pictures of me behind
my twenty dollar birthday cake from Metro.

With the glow of the lit candles reflected in her eyes,
she beamed at my Canon's viewfinder.
You should send this to a modelling agency,
she insisted, already lining up her next shot.

With a roll of my eye, I thought
thanks for fulfilling your yearly quota of motherly bias.
The tree complimenting the apple.
But then understanding came to me,
like a lost aircraft making an emergency landing.

Nigerian born, my mother's perception
of beauty was not narrowed and twisted
by European standards like mine was.
To her, black beauty isn't black beauty,
it's. just. beauty.

ode to the brown paper bag

(inspired by Ode to the Cockroach, by Cara Waterfall)

biodegradable, reusable, recyclable, flimsy material (unless you score the better kind)
tearable seams, folded corners, ridged rim

What is your problem? I ask.

the elementary school child's lunch bag, stuffed into his backpack, the hustler's container of
choice, her makeshift briefcase, the dime bag, the hyperventilating man's chance to breathe
again: inflate, deflate, inflate, deflate

You're lucky I'm even talking to you. He says.

the most mundane of bags. squished under a mattress, then disposed of on a street corner, a
status symbol, cash money, a figure of history, a sign of privilege, a decisive factor; into
the kitchen, or out in the fields with the other sun burnt negroes?

You are the darkest I'd ever go. He sneers.

ode to the brown paper bag, my humble reminder of my place in this world.

NOTES:

Routine — Sickle Cell Anemia is a genetic red blood cell disease that primarily affects black people. When a red blood cell is healthy, it is round and easily moves through the blood vessels to efficiently deliver oxygen to all parts of the body. Someone who suffers from Sickle Cell (like me) has red blood cells that can often become rigid, sticky, and crescent moon shaped. This occurrence causes a slow or block in blood flow affects and oxygenation.* The symptoms of S.C.A. can be severe - especially episodes of pain. This poem illustrates my usual experience going to the emergency room.

ode to the brown paper bag — The structure of this poem is inspired by "Ode to the Cockroach" by Cara Waterfall, found on page 60 of the Best Canadian Poetry (2019) anthology. Colourism is a form of prejudice that dates back as far as the time when the enslavement of black people was commonplace. The brown paper bag test was a colourist practice used to separate the fairer-skinned slaves from the darker-skinned ones. Though slavery is no longer legal, colourist ideals still run rampant both within and beyond the black community. This poem starts off describing the brown paper bag at its most basic level, transitioning to its many uses. The basic flow of the poem is interrupted by a couple lines of dialogue that darker-skinned women often hear.

Birthday Candles — I never really thought about how different my perception of beauty is to that of my immigrant mother's until my last birthday. This poem tells that story.

* Disclaimer — I'm not a Haematologist, so I suggest that you do some more research of the disease on your own.

Black History Month



LOCAL ARTIST ROSINA FEREDÉ CONNECTS TO HER ETHIOPIAN ROOTS

Aisha Javid

CREDIT: ROSINABTHEARTIST.WORDPRESS.COM

Young local artist incorporates her Ethiopian roots in her art.

Whether you're recovering from a tough breakup or celebrating your first job, your mind and heart instantly seek art. Art is a form of expression that affects us emotionally through illustrative or imaginative pieces of work. Examples of the varying styles of art include painting, theatre, literature, and music.

The beauty of art is created by its ability to be adaptive and reconstructed. Often times, artists explore and incorporate different modes of art into their own product, they're constantly bending the rules. For instance, many artists explore cultural music and fashion world-wide to incorporate into their own work. This allows the art to be unique.

A local artist, Rosina B. Ferede, is an Ethiopian Canadian who combines forms of Canadian and Ethiopian art into her work. She partakes in numerous styles of art, including songwriting, singing, acting, dancing, performing, screen and-blog writing.

Ferede developed a passion for music at an early age. As a young adult, she moved away from home to pursue a career in acting but also managed to be involved in extra-curricular activities which allowed her to sing and write songs.

"When I was a kid, I loved singing and dancing (traditional Ethiopian dances). I played the piano and later on, I even began writing my own songs. I would perform my

music anytime I was given the opportunity. I mostly performed at my school talent shows. By the time I was 17, I was interested in pursuing a career in acting. I moved away for school in Toronto. I enrolled in a degree-diploma program offered by York University and Humber College," explained Ferede.

Although Ferede feels there's been improvement in helping aspiring musicians, she still thinks there's a gap in accessing resources and opportunities.

"I was always trying to pursue music; I honestly didn't know where to turn. I'd search constantly for like-minded people, shows, programs like Honey Jam and the Remix Project, singing competitions, and open mics. I feel like there is a lot more today compared to several years ago. However, today, I do feel like everything is pretty much done through the internet (due to COVID). Although, I am rooted as an artist in Toronto, I'm still able to be at home here in London and work on my art."

Moreover, as a Black artist, Ferede shares an experience of bias during a film class, when an individual avoided selecting black students as characters in his exercise.

"This individual looked at a group of us, and honestly didn't select any Black student to participate in the exercise. I think he was trying to not be racist because he felt that he would probably have to give us a role

of either being 'the Black best friend' or a criminal. I feel like it's because the media sees us that way. They don't see the talent and ability for Black actors to play complex characters."

In addition, Ferede was and continues to be inspired by Black artists. She grew up listening to African American and Ethiopian music.

"I love a lot of different genres. I listen to world music, but I really appreciate Black music. I grew up listening to Ethiopian music, so there's a lot of different soundscapes, a lot of like ambient tones, and unique sounds. It's just beautiful."

Ferede also has long-term goals of supporting artists in Ethiopia.

"I want to eventually open some type of venture or resource for artists back in Ethiopia. My connection to Ethiopia artistically, is at the centre of what I do and a part of my identity. Like, I do Ethiopian dancing and I'm very fascinated by the music that I first listened to in my life. I'd love to see Ethiopian music be as popular as Afro-beat. We have jazz as well. I think Ethiopian music is appreciated but not mainstream."

Black History Month



WORLDS APART

Mohamed Alkawaja

CREDIT: FSU PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

My generation was raised to believe that racism doesn't exist anymore.

Discrimination was more tangible in the past. There were restaurants where Black people couldn't eat. There were bus seats that Black people couldn't occupy. There were streets Black people couldn't live in. There were schools Black people couldn't attend. Back then, although things were much worse, the discrimination was undeniable. Today, as far as regulations go, someone's skin colour doesn't prevent them from living, sitting, eating, or studying in any distinct place. Movements towards equality are significant and have millions of supporters. Discrimination is now considered a crime in many countries, including the United States. Nobody you know owns slaves. There have been Black presidents and congressmen. We are progressing. And this beautiful progress has formulated a terrible fallacy that "there are no racists in America" (*Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates).

My generation was raised to believe that racism doesn't exist anymore. Like Tinkerbell, we thought, it could only exist if we believed it did. That skin colour doesn't matter. We are all one; we are all human; we are all the same. Don't be fooled; however, racism isn't gone. It is disguised. People with dark skin have had to take on uncountable barriers, while most white people didn't even acknowledge the existence of these barriers. The existence of racism lies in the fact that white people are rarely the ones to fight it, talk about it, spread awareness, and confront it.

That's what separates a white person's world from their world. White people never had an obligation to do anything about it; Black people never had the choice of not doing. While white people may not own slaves, call anyone the n-word, or mistreat other people because of their skin colour, that doesn't put them in the right. By settling with their rights and not realizing that by conforming, they were impeding other people from having theirs.

Being BIPOC: “How is it okay for us to cry?”

Jessica Gould
INTERROBANG

While mental health can impact a large amount of people, cultural barriers often make it harder for BIPOC members to ask for help.

Where many BIPOC people stay silent about their personal struggles in order to fight big picture injustices, Akil McKenzie is learning to open the conversation of being vulnerable as a Black man.

“How is it okay for us to cry, when at the same time, we need to be standing in a march for people that are dying?” said McKenzie. “Whether it’s our Black brothers and sisters, or Indigenous lives that are being lost and not searched for, there’s all of these different things that we stand strong for. So when it comes to something like ‘Hey, you feel a little sad today, you should do something to make yourself happy,’ we don’t have time to do that.”

McKenzie noted personal mental health issues in comparison to the bigger issue of the BIPOC community, feel small.

“But then that leads us kind of like, falling through the cracks while shooting for that bigger picture. If I’m to bring it up to my parents, or if we’re talking in a group of other Black friends....this was growing up, it’s getting better now, but we’re like, ‘Hey, there’s this thing that’s kind of upsetting me a little,’ and if you want to cry about it, nah man. That’s white people s**t.”

However, suicide rates are higher for BIPOC and low income neighbourhoods.

“We would think that was a white people thing to kill yourself. Meanwhile, you’ll actually see that there’s quite a few Black people that are killing themselves. So while growing up, I’ve known quite a few that have killed themselves. I was wondering where’s the disconnect? Because it felt so foreign.”

Men who face multi-layer obstacles with intersectional racial, social, and cultural aspects intertwined with masculinity are faced with larger factors against accessing help for mental health.

“It’s difficult making the transition into the new world of how we’re

expected to be able to just take on this new idea of changing your emotions as a BIPOC man, because we’ve grown up and been given expectations our entire life. Now within the span of two years: ‘Why aren’t you different?’ and that’s a hard change to make. That’s all we’ve known. We’re actually being asked for so much where, ‘Hey, it’s okay to be whatever now’ and it’s never been okay, now....you just expect us to just transition smoothly? I’ve had 24 years prior of not being allowed to do this, and one year of it being okay to cry.”

In the wake of the pandemic, mental health has been put in a new light, with many opening up for the first time.

“Especially when you’ve had things bottled up for so long, and then there’s also so much going on. That is hard to take time to just build yourself. There’s things going on with work and it’s already harder to get a job as a Black man. Then you look out your window and people are dying around you and then you’re supposed to find time to focus on yourself and grow as a person.”



CREDIT: COURTESY OF AKIL MCKENZIE

“You look out your window and people are dying around you and then you’re supposed to find time to focus on yourself and grow as a person.”

In the struggle for seeking the big picture of equality and justice for BIPOC issues, McKenzie noted the importance of taking some time to find what needs attention and healing within yourself.

COVER CONTEST

?!

DEADLINE: **FEBRUARY 14, 2022**

THEME: **WHAT DOES DIVERSITY MEAN TO YOU?**

PRIZE: **\$200**



ian.indiano

CREDIT: IAN INDIANO

In this article, you will find a collection of relevant data to complement and expand your understanding of Black history in Canada.

Understanding the numbers: Canada's Black population

Ian Indiano
INTERROBANG

In the world we live in, information and content are being produced faster than ever. Along with the growing politicization of our speech, it is inevitable that social analyses have become a great part of our lives. However, although we are constantly referring to marginalized communities, we rarely know the actual numbers that give basis to our analysis. In this article, you will find a collection of relevant data to complement and expand your understanding of Black history in Canada.

To begin with, it is important to notice that there is a chance that these numbers might be wrong. Black Canadians have been considerably undercounted in census data. For example, it was reported in a study by McGill University that in the 1991 Canadian Census, 43 per cent of all Black Canadians were not counted as Black. Although following censuses have been much more consistent with the population of Black Canadians, no study has been conducted to examine if Black Canadians are still being undercounted since then.

That said, off we go with the official numbers. According to the Canadian government website, in 2016, 1.2 million people reported being Black in Canada, which means that the population has doubled in the past 20 years, when 573,860 were counted. This number represents 3.5 per cent of Canada's total population, therefore defined as a minority. This fast-growing population might reach five per cent of the population by 2036 according to some projections.

When it comes to discrimination, according to crowdsourcing data collected by the government in 2020, Black participants were more than twice as likely to report that they had experienced discrimination than white participants. From that, 84 per cent reported that they had experienced race or skin colour-related discrimination, which translated to the low levels of confidence in the court system in Canada reported by 46 per cent of Black participants, versus 22 per cent of white participants.

In Canada, Black newcomers come from about 125 different countries. The two main countries of birth for Black immigrants are Jamaica and Haiti. Other significant countries are Nigeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. That said, Canada is the top place of birth for the Black population. In 2016 more than four in 10 Black people were born in Canada.

The regions with the most significant Black populations are in Ontario (where 4.7 per cent of the population is Black, followed by Quebec (four per cent), Alberta (3.3 per cent), and British Columbia (one per cent).

According to the government, the future looks bright for the Black population. In 2016, the majority of the Black population said that their standard of living, employment opportunities, education and opportunities to acquire assets are better than those of the previous generation. In 2016, nearly all Black youth (aged 15 to 25) said they wanted to achieve at least a bachelor's degree.

Canada has high numbers of Black citizens in comparison to many other countries, but also a long way to go to be considered a fair and equal nation.

Things to do on Valentine's Day: Singles edition

Savannah Bisailon
INTERROBANG

Valentine's Day is known for its celebration of love and many people tend to focus on the romantic aspect of the holiday, often looking for things to do with their partners. But there are a lot of ways to celebrate with just you and your friends.

One of my favourite nights amongst friends are charcuterie board nights, where everyone brings a different themed charcuterie board. You can find ideas on Pinterest and each board can vary from the classic cheese and meat board to sweet treats. Pair those with a nice movie, and there's a cute little date night amongst friends.

Another fun idea could be a game night, whether it's in person or via Zoom. Everyone orders their favourite takeout or makes their favourite meal, playing games and sharing laughs.

I love spending Valentine's Day with friends, as we always make sure one another feels the love, especially on a day that is more specifically targeted to couples. Every year, my roommate and I make little Valentine's Day bags up for our friends that usually include a cheesy card and some chocolate, just as a little reminder to show that we appreciate them.

Another fun way to spend our Valentine's Day is having a potluck where everyone brings their favourite dish. Being single on Valentine's Day has its perks, because it means you have more time to spend with your friends and you could treat it like an excuse to hang out.



CREDIT: ANETLANDA

Do not forget to treat yourself and remember that you do not need to have a date to have fun.

Last year, my friends and I gathered over Zoom and watched a stupid movie with a few drinks and it was probably one of the best Valentine's Days I'd had in a while. We shared some laughs and had a great time just laughing until the late hours of the night.

Another fun idea I've seen is a paint night or paint class, where everyone paints together while sipping on their favourite beverage. Plus, at the end of the night, everyone goes home with a painting. If

you don't want to attend a class, it is easy to just go to a dollar store, where everyone can buy the same supplies and decide on what they are painting together.

Of course, if you'd rather be alone on Valentine's Day, you could always treat yourself to a nice dinner and a movie or a nice soak in the tub with a good book.

Most importantly, as Valentine's Day approaches do not forget to treat yourself and remember that you do not need to have a date to have fun.

Why is Black History Month important to you?

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Tom Hutchison-Hounsell

Student Representative to The Board of Governors

New year, no motivation

Kate Otterbein
INTERROBANG

Two years. We have been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic for two years. It's insane to think that it has been that long... but at the same time... no, it's not. It has felt like a lifetime since life was put on hold and we started living in a constant state of uncertainty. It's scary and everybody's over it, but life isn't back to normal yet. It's *exhausting*. This year especially has been hard on a lot of people and that has led to a lack of motivation that almost everyone is experiencing.

I have found it difficult to get motivated and be ready to tackle the day. It seems every day is the same and there isn't much exciting happening. We are on a hamster wheel called life.

Dr. Julie Aitken Schermer is a professor with the Departments of Psychology and Management and Organizational Studies at Western University. She spoke about the term "achievement motivation" and how it reflects what we're living through right now.

"[Henry] Murray devised the term, 'Need for Achievement,' to describe people's inherent drive to succeed," said Aitken Schermer. "This drive is the motivation factor. 'Need for Achievement' is sometimes measured using Jackson's Personality Research Form questionnaire and has been found to have a genetic component. Following, there has been some research suggesting that the achievement motivation is, for some, internally driven, and for others, it's influenced by feedback from others."

The need for achievement can vary from person to person and there are different factors affecting that.

"Those with a higher internal drive to achieve will be less affected by working alone or online because they are driven to succeed regardless of the circumstances. Internally motivated individuals may find some of the restrictions annoying, but they will persevere. Who will suffer will be those who

require feedback and interaction from their peers and instructors. Students who perform best in group projects are also suffering, as the richness of their interactions with other students has been depleted."

Aitken Schermer said that the length of the pandemic will have a detrimental effect on the motivation of those who require interaction for motivation. It has been a long two years and not being able to see people very often has been hard for them.

"It's hard to come up with one solution with respect to increasing motivation. One possibility is to incorporate Goal Setting Theory into people's activities.

The goals they set should be obtainable, challenging (not too hard or too easy), and as concrete as possible. The great thing about goals that meet these criteria is that the feedback is built into the goal. An individual might state that they want to achieve a task by a certain day. Each day that passes means that individual can measure how close they are to completing the task using the calendar. That way, feedback is built into the process."

Motivation is difficult right now. And there really isn't a direct solution, as Aitken Schermer said, to building motivation and getting out of this rut that so many of us are currently in. But if you're someone who is motivated based on feedback, it might not hurt to set goals and find that feedback using the calendar. Hopefully by using that method, the pandemic will seem to fly by.



CREDIT: DYLAN CHARETTE

This year has been hard on everyone and so many people are experiencing a lack of motivation.

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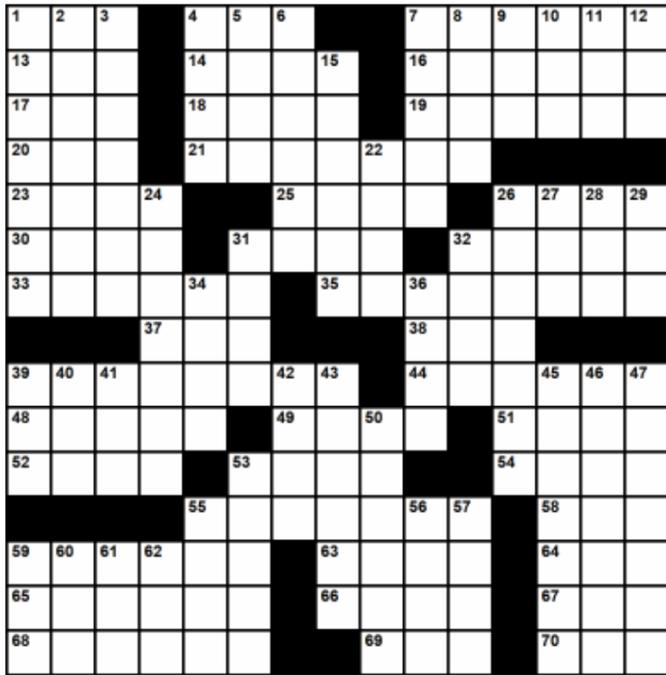
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CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1. "Peer Gynt" character
- 4. Halifax clock setting: Abbr.
- 7. Addictive Asian nuts
- 13. Car title info
- 14. Takes to court
- 16. Mountain ridges
- 17. Aged
- 18. Title word of a song from Mozart's "Requiem"
- 19. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 20. Actor Gulager
- 21. Some bagel seeds
- 23. Broadcasts
- 25. Major followers
- 26. 500 sheets of paper
- 30. Difficult to comprehend
- 31. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 32. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 33. Shakespeare's Duke of Illyria
- 35. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 37. Bird's beak
- 38. "___ the glad waters of the dark blue sea": Byron
- 39. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 44. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 48. Chilled
- 49. One teaspoon, maybe
- 51. Collector's suffix
- 52. Foolhardy
- 53. All there
- 54. New driver, typically
- 55. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 58. Compass reading
- 59. Kitchen utensil
- 63. Champagne with a diaeresis
- 64. Asian festival
- 65. Ancient meeting places



- 66. Vicinity
- 67. Abbreviation after many a general's name
- 68. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 69. It may finish second
- 70. Poem of praise
- 26. Illuminated from behind
- 27. poetic "even."
- 28. Siamese coin.
- 29. Publishing (abbrev.)
- 31. Mr. Burns's teddy bear on "The Simpsons"
- 32. Mineral pit
- 34. Evening, informally
- 36. Jack's love in "Titanic"
- 39. ___ favor (please, in Spanish)
- 40. ___ crusade
- 41. Bard's contraction
- 42. Dutch cheese
- 43. California wine center
- 45. Baton wielder
- 46. Kind of juniper
- 47. Broadway girl
- 50. Mrs., in Mexico
- 53. Driving hazard
- 55. Winglike
- 56. Bucks
- 57. "Don't move!"
- 59. Mary ___ cosmetics
- 60. Swelled head
- 61. Cloak
- 62. 1989 Broadway monodrama

DOWN

- 1. Example of a potassium-rich food
- 2. More inane and ridiculous
- 3. Stands the test of time
- 4. "No returns"
- 5. "No problem!"
- 6. Movie preview
- 7. Naïve ones
- 8. Time periods
- 9. Top rating
- 10. When a plane is due in, for short
- 11. Football great Dawson
- 12. Govt. agency that has your number
- 15. Airport in Washington
- 22. Computer list
- 24. Example of a potassium-rich food

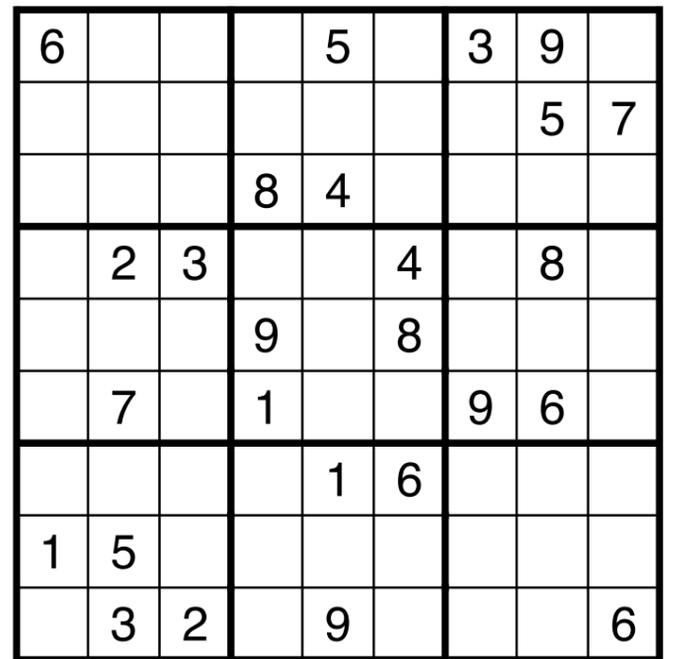
WORD SEARCH



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Langston Hughes | Jesse Owens | Leaders | Kamala Harris |
| Carter G. Woodson | Muhammad Ali | Movement | Identity |
| MLK Jr | Love | Malcolm X | Phenomenal |
| | Diversity | Ruby Bridges | Ella Baker |
| | Barack Obama | Strength | |

SUDOKU



Puzzle rating: Hard

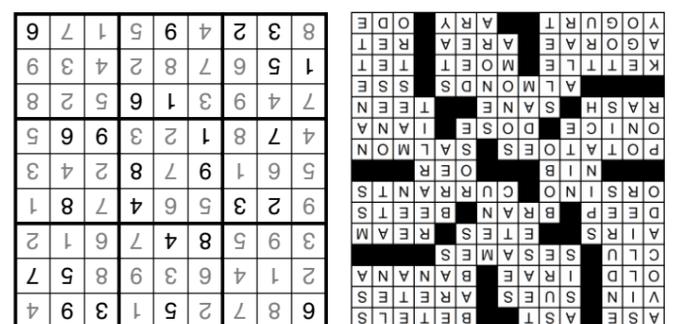
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 grid contains the digits 1 through 9. That means no number is repeated in any column, row or box.

CRYPTOGRAM

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
24							8						5												

“
 3 25 14 3 20 4 6 11 5 11 5 24 11 6 16 18 11 15 2 18 20
 16 8 11 6 18 3 26 11 4 17 11 13 21 3 25 25 20 14 8 11 15
 21 16 4 3 8 3 6 26 18 15 11
 22 18 24 11 24 6 20 3 15 16
 ”

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



— Kobe Bryant
 “Always remember to enjoy the road, especially when it's a hard one.”

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Freshman Fifteen



Aries

Do something you find meaningful this month. You can make a difference if you offer your skills to help someone in need or a cause that motivates you. You'll connect with someone who shares your vision. Share your knowledge and experience with like-minded people, and you will discover a way to use your skills in a manner that makes you feel good about the contribution you make. Pay attention to what others do and say and you'll know what's required of you to make what you have to offer valuable. An adjustment will turn out better than anticipated.

Taurus

Do what makes you happy this month. Indulge in activities that motivate you to spend more time with someone who enjoys the same things as you. Romance is in the stars. Don't let anyone limit what you can do. Take the path that offers something in return. Always giving and never receiving will wear thin. Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Hook up with someone who gets you. A change of plans will play in your favour. Share your vision and live up to your promises. Don't take on more than you can handle or you'll face criticism. Avoid unnecessary health risks.

Gemini

Pay attention to what's important and will make a difference regarding your reputation. The effort you put in will not go unnoticed. You'll gain insight into trends that can help you advance. Use your skills to accommodate whatever changes occur and refuse to let anyone stand in your way or push you in a direction that doesn't suit you. Someone will confuse you with innuendos, don't be gullible; use intelligence and experience to overcome misdirection. Reach out to people you know you can trust and rely on for sound advice and hands-on help.

Cancer

Use ingenuity and pull everything together this month. Map out a plan that brings about positive change and enhances your life and relationships with others. Do your own thing. Refuse to let anyone interfere with your progress or make comments or suggestions that cause uncertainty. Join forces with someone who sparks your imagination. Opportunities will come from an unusual source. Romance will improve your life. Emotions will reach an all-time high if you get into a debate with someone close to you. Diplomacy is in your best interest.

Leo

Think about the direction you see yourself heading and put together a plan that will help you reach your destination of choice. An unexpected force play is a blessing in disguise. Pay attention to what others are doing this month. Control your emotions, and it will simplify a situation that causes uncertainty. Follow your intuition, not what someone else chooses to do. An experience will change how you proceed. Keep your finger on the pulse and pick up skills that will lead to success. Share your thoughts and feelings with someone special and you'll reach a decision that satisfies both your needs.

Virgo

Plan something special for you and someone you love. A surprise will change the dynamics of your relationship. Romance is featured, and revealing feelings is encouraged. A change someone makes will mess with your routine. Don't show displeasure; work with what's available to you. A playful approach to life will attract positive attention. The possibilities are endless if you use your imagination and try something new and exciting. Put a plan in place and follow through. Proceed with caution when money or health matters surface. Spontaneity will turn into a fiasco.

Libra

Take your time, plan carefully, and don't share too much information with others. It's best to have everything in place to avoid opposition. Put more effort into connecting with people who can help you get ahead instead of wasting time facing off with someone who will never see things your way. Confidence and finishing what you start is the path to success. Take a back seat and listen to what others contribute. Mull over the information, and you'll figure out what to do next. Time is on your side. Tie up loose ends and make your position clear to someone questioning what you are doing.

Scorpio

Reach out to a friend or relative who can shed light on something you find confusing or questionable. Seeing things through someone else's eyes will enlighten you. Outmaneuver anyone who attempts to play with your emotions. Use insight and experience to deal with meddlers and those trying to take advantage of you. You'll attract opportunities that grab you emotionally, intellectually and encourage you to act physically to ensure things get done to your specifications. Social events can turn sour quickly if you or someone else is indulgent.

Sagittarius

Discipline is essential if you want to avoid a falling out over something you neglect to finish or a promise you choose not to honour. Keep your word. Stop fretting over something you can't change and concentrate on what you can achieve. Back away from people heading in the opposite direction. Gravitate toward those who can help you reach your goal. Don't get caught in someone else's melodrama or it will affect your relationship with a friend or relative. Stick close to home and put your energy into making your surroundings more convenient.

Capricorn

Ponder over your options and you'll come up with a plan that will help you make positive lifestyle changes. Romance is encouraged. Look at the pros and cons before changing your lifestyle. Sticking to a budget is highly recommended. You'll be privy to inside information that can help you physically, financially, and emotionally. Consider the possibilities and search for a unique way to use your skills to take advantage of an opportunity. You're likely to have a run-in this month with a friend or relative if you cannot agree on something.

Aquarius

A change someone enforces will leave you in a compromising position. Do whatever you can to offset the outcome. Trust in yourself and your ability to get things done all by yourself. Be observant and you'll gain insight into the best way to handle a situation you encounter with a friend or relative. Someone will tempt you to overspend and be self-indulgent. Take a moment to consider the outcome and the cost involved. You can have fun without losing control. Rethink your financial strategy and you'll come up with a reasonable way to make ends meet.

Pisces

Participate in something you feel passionate about and something interesting will transpire. A connection you make will change how you live and do things in the future. Look over finances and reconfigure anything you think might be a problem. Be specific regarding what you will do to ensure you aren't stuck with an expense you cannot afford. Your intuition will guide you regarding something or someone that intrigues you. Look at the possibilities and how you can make a difference. A disagreement will be a telltale sign of what to expect moving forward. Lay down ground rules to avoid disappointment.

Breaking racial barriers in sports

Brad Kraemer
INTERROBANG

In celebration of Black History Month, Interrobang is commemorating some trailblazers in the world of sports. For almost half the history of most sports, Black men were not allowed to participate in professional leagues due to segregation and in all of these stories, there are individuals who endured hateful acts of racism and still found a way to shine.

Jackie Robinson

We first honour arguably the most influential barrier-breaker of all-time, Jack Roosevelt Robinson. Since the 1880s, Major League Baseball (MLB) relegated Black players to what was called the “Negro leagues” and in 1945, Robinson began playing for the Kansas City Monarchs. Around this time, a few teams were warming up to the idea of signing a Black ball-player, namely the Brooklyn Dodgers (currently the Los Angeles Dodgers). Branch Rickey was the president and general manager of the Dodgers and he wanted to make sure the Black player he signed was able to withstand the inevitable racial abuse that would be directed at him. When Rickey saw Robinson in a tryout he interviewed him and famously asked if he could face the abuse without “taking the bait.” Robinson replied, “Are you looking for a Negro who is afraid to fight back?” Rickey believed that it took more courage to not fight back and to “turn the other cheek” to racial antagonism. Robinson eventually made his MLB debut in 1947 with a mixed reception. Players on his own team refused to play with him, plenty of fans were screaming racial slurs towards him and he was constantly the target of foul play from his opponents. A player on the St. Louis Cardinals (a team that was particularly tough on Robinson), Enos Slaughter gave Robinson a seven-inch gash with his metal cleats. After a lot of abuse and Robinson showing his exemplary character, the Dodgers finally rallied around Jackie, and went on to win a World Series in 1955. To this day, Robinson is the face of barrier-breaking moments in sports and is the inspiration to many Black athletes in more sports than just baseball. His number “42” has been retired by the MLB league-wide and for one day every year, the whole league wears his number in his honour. Robinson passed away in 1972, but his legacy will always endure...just like him.

Willie O’Ree

Next, we honour the first Black hockey player in the history of the National Hockey League (NHL). O’Ree met Jackie Robinson at a young age and was inspired to be an athlete. He grew up as one of the only two Black families in Fredericton, New Brunswick and immediately became passionate about hockey when he first got on the ice at the age of three. O’Ree became quite the minor league hockey player, scoring at a point-per-game pace in the Quebec Junior Hockey League and the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA). While



CREDIT: DYLAN CHARETTE

These individuals are all truly pioneers of each of their respective sports and deserve all the recognition they can get.

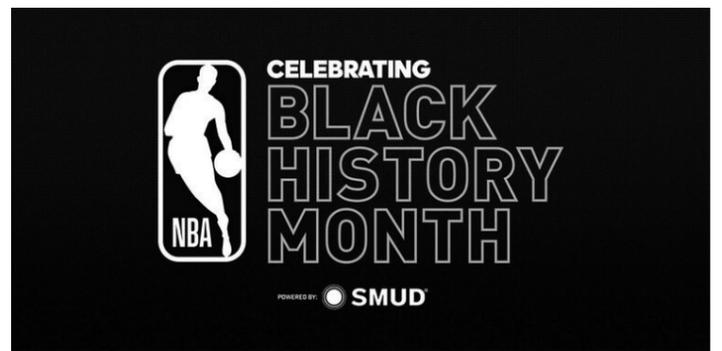
playing for the Kitchener Canucks in the OHA, O’Ree lost 95 per cent of his vision from an errant puck. A doctor recommended O’Ree quit hockey, but instead, he was back on the ice in a matter of weeks. In the senior league, O’Ree returned to Quebec to play for the Aces, a team with a history of integration. During his time with the Aces, O’Ree shared the ice with Stan Maxwell, another Black Canadian. O’Ree’s play caught the eye of the Boston Bruins, an NHL squad who had a good relationship with the Aces. The Bruins would call up O’Ree to replace an injured player without any knowledge of the lack of vision in his right eye. O’Ree’s determination to make the NHL with only one eye was nothing short of incredible, let alone the bravery it took to face the racial abuse he witnessed as a Black man in a predominantly white sport. In 2018, O’Ree was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame and on Jan. 18 of this year, the Bruins retired O’Ree’s number “22.”

Jesse Owens

Before Jackie Robinson, there was Jesse Owens, a Black track and field athlete that won golds in arguably the most impressive circumstances at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The reason these games were so significant was because of the belief from Third Reich commander Adolf Hitler that the “Aryan race” was superior. Owens was, at first, hesitant to take part in the games but ultimately decided to compete. Deep in the heart of Nazi Germany, Owens arrived to the Olympiastadion to chants of what is translated to “where is Jesse?” Although the games were politically charged, Owens actually wasn’t hated by the German public. In fact, one of the German long jumpers helped Owens with the rules and gave him a technique that led to Owens winning the gold instead of failing to qualify. Owens would win three other golds in the sprinting events, effectively ruining Hitler’s plan of proving his race

superior. Hitler never once shook hands with Owens or took part in any of his medal ceremonies. Despite looking like a refusal to acknowledge Owens, Owens actually defended Hitler: “Hitler had a certain time to come to the stadium and a certain time to leave. It happened he had to leave before the victory ceremony after the 100 metres. But before he left I was on my way to a broadcast and passed near his box. He waved at me and I waved back. I think it was bad taste to criticize the ‘man of the hour’ in another country.” This really shows Owens’ character. In such a hostile environment, he still had it in him to publicly defend the man who was hellbent on putting down people of his race. Owens’ came home and struggled to find work. A man who should have been seen as a hero, essentially returned to life as normal, though in due time Owens was honoured with many awards throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s.

These three men are just a few of the many examples of incredible barrier-breakers in sports history. There are so many men and women who have been trailblazers in their sports, like Althea Gibson becoming the first Black tennis player to win a grand slam and inspiring one of the best we’ve ever seen on a tennis court in Serena Williams. Lewis Hamilton is still the only Black driver to start a Grand Prix in Formula One history, not to mention win a record-breaking seven world titles and over 100 races. Texas Western was the first college basketball team to start five Black players in 1966, and went on to win the NCAA championship in front of an all-white crowd, against all-white Kentucky, judged by all white referees. The list goes on and on. These stories are incredible and deserve to be told more often than once a year during Black History Month. These individuals are all truly pioneers of each of their respective sports and deserve all the recognition they can get.



CREDIT: NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

It has been eight years since the NBA first launched their “Dream Big” campaign.

Black History Month in the NBA

Brad Kraemer
INTERROBANG

The National Basketball Association (NBA) is a league that is dominated by Black men. From Bill Russell, to Wilt Chamberlain, to Magic Johnson, to Michael Jordan and all the way to LeBron James. In 2020, three quarters of the players were Black, so it’s natural that NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and the rest of the league honour Black History Month the most. Maybe other sports are still lagging behind, but that’s a conversation for another day. Let’s take a look at the significance of February in the NBA.

The History

In 1976, Carter Woodson’s Negro History Week expanded to Black History Month. However the NBA didn’t start celebrating any Black history except for Martin Luther King day in 1986. MLK day doesn’t actually take place in Black History Month, but it’s still important to note the 36-year history of hosting NBA games on the third Monday of January. It is unclear when the NBA truly started making the smallest of recognitions for BHM, however, in 2014, the NBA launched their “Dream Big” campaign. The campaign brought new elements to the All-Star game including a Dream Big theme park, shirts for the players to wear during warm-ups and all throughout the broadcast of games in February, they’d have spots of successful Black men and women talk about their dreams and inspirations. This included the likes of a doctor, a judge and a photographer to name a few. They also had schools from the cities the teams play in teaching an African-American history course about the contributions in the United States. Since then, both the players and the league have started many initiatives and continue to prioritize February as an important month of the year. The NBA has a page on their website dedicated to inspiring action, barrier-breakers and much more. February has become one of the best months of the year in the NBA.

The Bubble

The year 2020 was tough for everyone around the world and it was no different in the NBA. After the suspension of the season due to COVID-19, several players were on the streets in the midst of a massive nationwide Black Lives Matter protest. Many of those who didn’t take part in the protests, shared their thoughts on social media. It was very important to the players that the NBA recognized what was going on and not return to play as if nothing had happened. Players were called to action in July to resume the season in the Orlando bubble, meaning no physical contact with the outside world. The NBA gave the players a multitude of words and statements that they could wear on the back of their jersey. This included “Black Lives Matter,” “How many more,”

“I can’t breathe,” and many more. Players locked arms and knelt for the anthems performed exclusively by Black artists and wore Black Lives Matter shirts in support of each other and the protest. It clearly wasn’t enough. On Aug. 26, three days after Jacob Blake was fatally shot by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Bucks refused to play their playoff game against the Orlando Magic. Soon, all teams would follow suit and go on strike. Some athletes in other sports also decided to miss games due to the message the NBA was trying to send. They continued play a few days later, but that time the message was heard loud and clear. The players would no longer be tolerant of how they were treated by their country.

The Shoes

In 2005, the first ever BHM colourway was born. It was the Nike Air Force 1 Low BHM. The purpose of the shoes was simply to celebrate Black History Month and they soon became a big hit on and off the court. Not only were the shoes fashionable, but they soon evolved into a tradition for NBA players to wear on MLK Day starting in 2011 and during Black History Month for years after. In no time, other companies like Adidas and Under Armour were jumping on the trend and making colourways of their own. Some of the best players in the world like Steph Curry, Damian Lillard, the late Kobe Bryant and Kyrie Irving all came out with and wore their own signature shoe with a BHM colour scheme, the latter two sponsored by Nike and sporting their now iconic BHM logo. Each year the colour scheme on the collection of Nike shoes has a specific meaning as well and an action taken by the company as a result. For example in 2014, it was “a celebration of Sport Royalty, honouring LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony, Allyson Felix, Maya Moore, Theotis Beasley and Ishod Wair. One hundred per cent of net proceeds (up to \$1 million) went to the NIKE Ever Higher Fund, supporting charitable initiatives that leverage the power of sport to maximize the human potential of underserved youth.” Black History Month carries so much more significance than some sneakers or court shoes, but it’s still an awesome tradition carried by players in the NBA nonetheless.

The NBA will always be iconic in the history of Black athletes in North America and they will continue to do more to honour the Black pioneers of the game. Fans still want to see more Black ownership and management throughout the league (a massive issue in the NFL), and more top college recruits attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Just 13 of 30 NBA teams had a Black coach this year and consensus top 15 recruit Makur Maker joined Howard University just over a year ago. More Black representation has started, but it’s far from over.

Indie developers are leading the way for better representation in gaming

Asha Swann
THE EYEOPENER

While television and film industries have begun in recent years to address the lack of diverse characters in their stories, some gamers are concerned that the growth of the video game industry isn't keeping up with an accurate representation of their diverse player base.

Last year, the video game industry expanded in value to US\$300 billion, exceeding both the movie and sports industries, according to a report by Accenture. The billion-dollar industry has churned out popular games like *Animal Crossing*, *Valorant* and *The Last of Us* that have introduced new players to the world of gaming—many of which are BIPOC who don't get to see themselves as the main characters.

First-year Ryerson philosophy student Alison Air said she has played video games her whole life. She grew up drawn to role-playing and narrative-based games with a strong focus on characters and their emotional backgrounds. As an Asian woman, she said she struggled to feel represented through the games she played as a child, though she wasn't sure how to express it.

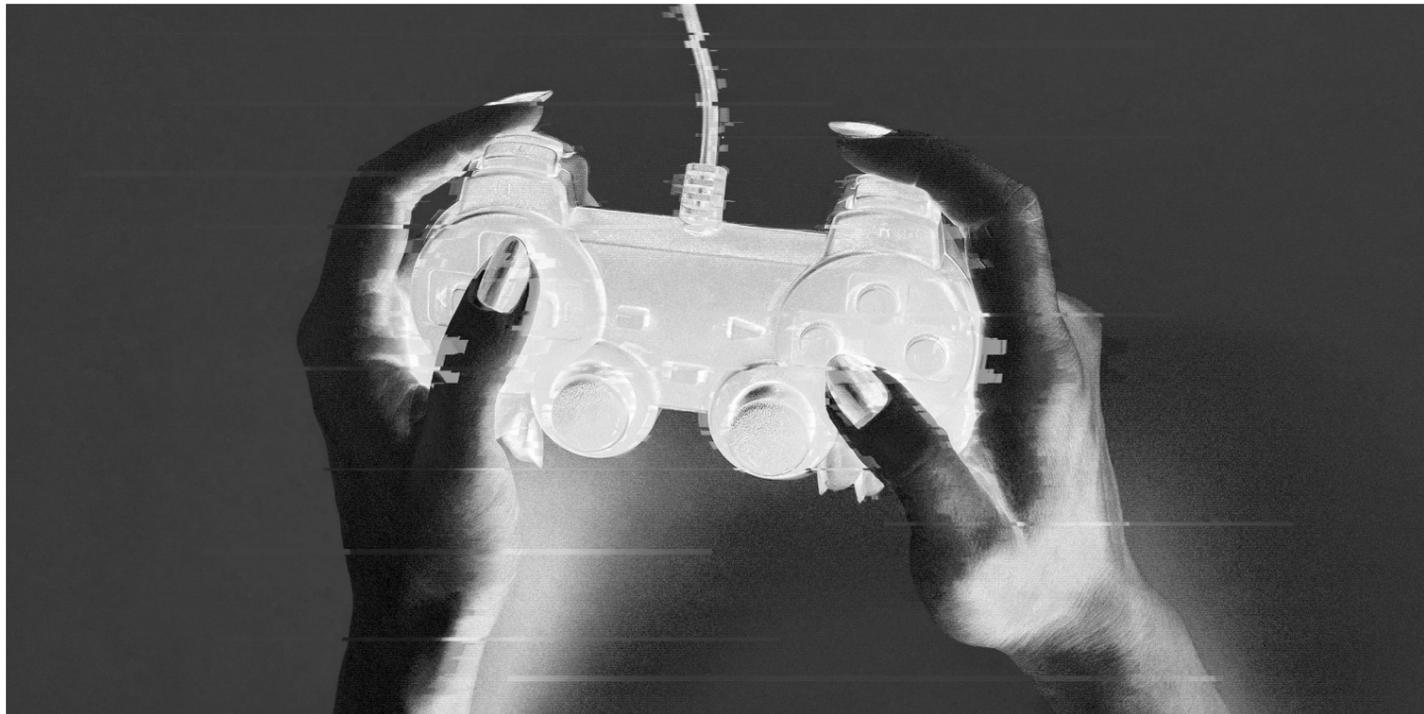
As a result, she was drawn towards indie games, where the developers were often bold enough to create unique themes and the type of representation she could relate to.

In 2018, she noticed that Electronic Arts, the studio that produces *Battlefield*, received substantial online pushback when the company revealed that the next game in the series would feature a woman main character.

"The rampant problem of bigoted attitudes dominating gaming makes it a lot more difficult for queer people to really get into it," said Air. "With indie games, the community is more tight-knit and there's more of a sense of an 'I'm actually playing with people' rather than random 14-year-old kids that are gonna yell slurs at me."

Though characters of colour are sometimes featured in mainstream games, these characters are not always accurate depictions. Games like *Grand Theft Auto Online* and *Outriders* have been called out by players for their bleak customizations of authentic Black hairstyles compared to non-Black characters.

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2,



CREDIT: MURAVIN

Some gamers are concerned that the growth of the video game industry isn't keeping up with an accurate representation of their diverse player base.

created by Infinity Ward, a subdivision of one of the world's largest gaming companies, Activision, came under fire for racism in the game's portrayal of Pakistan. One of the game's maps features the real city of Karachi, Pakistan. However, the game inaccurately shows Arabic as the language of the region, with all storefronts showing signs in Arabic. The official language of the region is actually Urdu, with census data showing that Karachi has the highest Urdu-speaking population in the country.

Games released by major gaming developers—also known as AAA games—are productions with multi-million dollar budgets coming from studios like Sony, EA, Nintendo and Riot, that are dominating the gaming market.

Game design professor at Ryerson Kristopher Alexander said independent games are more inclusive and vastly outnumber mainstream ones in the variety of authentic storytelling.

Alexander plays one indie game every year with his students called *Virginia*. This award-winning game has the user playing as the main character, a Black FBI agent investigating a missing person's case in a small town in the state of Virginia.

Though the graphics seem simplistic, the game is complex, with intricate

plot points and emotional character growth. He said the game brings students to deep emotional levels because it incorporates experiences that reflect the realities of being a Black woman in the southern US.

These are the types of games that Alexander has always prioritized. He said he doesn't think it is an issue of whether accurate representation exists in video games, it's just that not many people are aware of what indie games have to offer.

Out of the over 10,000 new games released on Steam in 2020, less than 100 came from mainstream producers. Alexander said through indie games, diversity and representation have been thriving because they offer more flexibility and don't have the same pressures from investors.

"The people that make *Thirsty Suitors* have a different vision with a different budget," said Alexander. "[Major developers] have so many angel investors that are trying to get a return on investment, of course they're going to have [bigger] a marketing campaign."

Though games from mainstream developers bring in the most money, Alexander said because gaming is a relatively new industry, as more people from all backgrounds start studying game design, it's only natural that games will soon reflect the diversity of the people who make them.

Technological advancements in 3D animation and character design mean creating characters with unique and diverse stories is easier than ever. Though justifiably criticized in the past, some 3D artists are looking to Disney as proof that diverse stories can be a financial success.

Yusra Shahid is an American-based visual developer in animation who has worked for the likes of Nintendo, CBS and Disney. As a content creator with both Muslim and Indian heritage, she said creating diverse characters is about telling stories that represent the millions of people of colour, like herself, that are consuming them.

She said it's essential for people working in any type of visual

development to understand that accurate representation shows a range of looks—no matter the race.

"A lot of people don't really understand the diversity within races. That can be quite overlooked," said Shahid. "If you were going to design an Indian character, it would be really great if they could have an actual Indian character designer designing it."

Shahid praised how far animation has come in recent years. With the success of animation films like *Moana* and *Coco*—both of which feature characters of colour and together have grossed over \$1.4 billion worldwide—it's clear that diverse stories also have an international audience.

A study by the Creative Artists Agency and Parrot Analytics found that the demand for new content featuring diverse casts has more than tripled since 2017. Despite the growing demand for diverse content, Shahid said she notices a gap.

While huge studios like Disney and Pixar have prioritized making better culturally-representative stories, the biggest gaming studios aren't consistently making the same traction.

Challenging the status quo in gaming

From 2017 to 2021, the top-selling games by AAA developers primarily featured white male protagonists, according to an analysis from DiamondLobby. Some developers, like Electronic Arts, have made strides in creating diverse content that has been well-received by players.

EA's *Apex Legends* has been praised as a new industry standard for its non-sexualized portrayal of female characters, openly LGBTQ+ characters and varying skin tones and hairstyles. With over 100 million players worldwide in 2021, *Apex Legends* exists as proof that AAA companies can make successful, well-loved, diverse games.

As gaming expands, so do the ways in which players not only consume content but interact with others in the community.

According to a 2019 study by the International Game Developers

Association, 65 per cent of respondents said they feel there aren't equal opportunities for all in the gaming industry. Community members have criticized the lack of accountability in promoting diversity in Esports and on Twitch—a streaming platform that gives content creators of colour like Kasen Patterson (@CupAhNoodle) and @DarkMimi a platform to highlight both popular and indie games to their viewers.

Jes Do, a second-year RTA new media student and member of the Ryerson Esports team, said they observed similar patterns of mainstream developers leaning towards archetypal character options.

"Mainstream games made by big companies are playing safe and going with the character models that are the most popular, hence the lack of diversity," said Do. "But with the [gaming] community fighting for more diversity, no doubt we will see more [character] styles in the future."

Independent developers like Annapurna Interactive and Variable State are more powerful than ever, with countless pieces of technology available at their disposal. Unreal Engine, the world's most advanced 3D creation software, which was used to create the *Bioshock* series—*Borderlands*, *Gears of War* and countless others—is available for free.

Once only available at a premium, this resource has been used by the same AAA companies that make mainstream games. Indie developers, Alexander explained, are the diverse creators that gamers are looking for.

For Air, she said she's looking forward to playing games with unique perspectives that are both indie and AAA.

"The demographic of the gaming population is slowly changing to be more inclusive and to be more accepting of diversity," said Air.

Gaming companies that only focus on appealing to a certain demographic of players to make profit, she said, would see more loyal gamers if they were willing to prioritize diversity in gaming.

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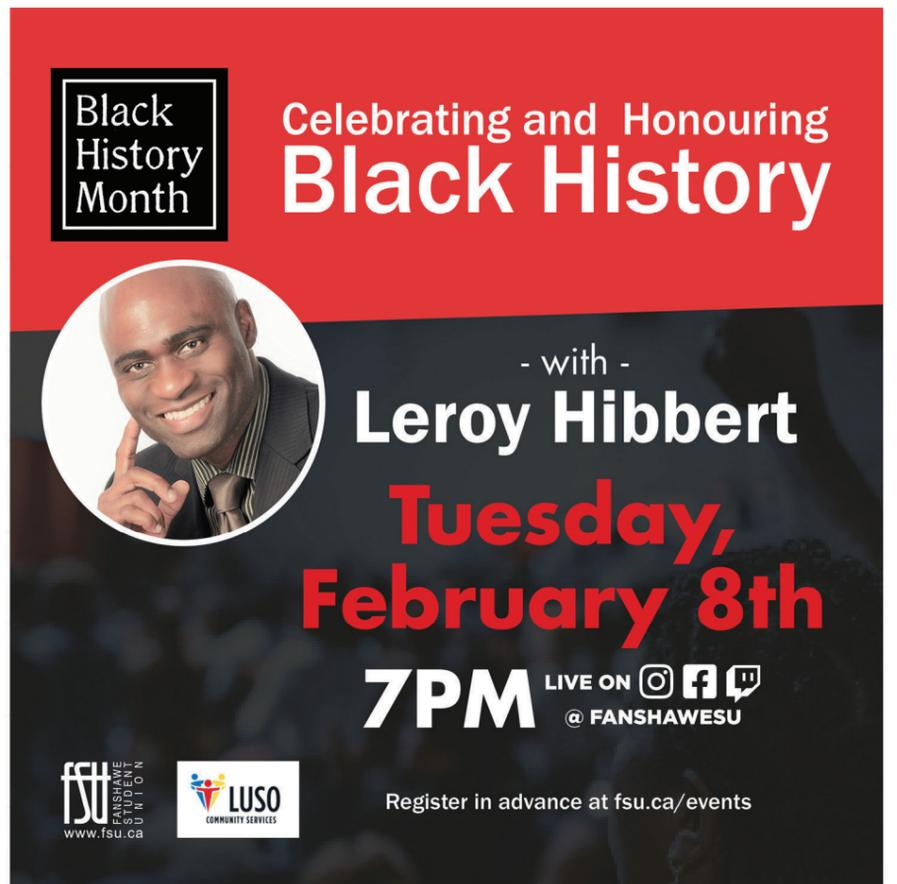
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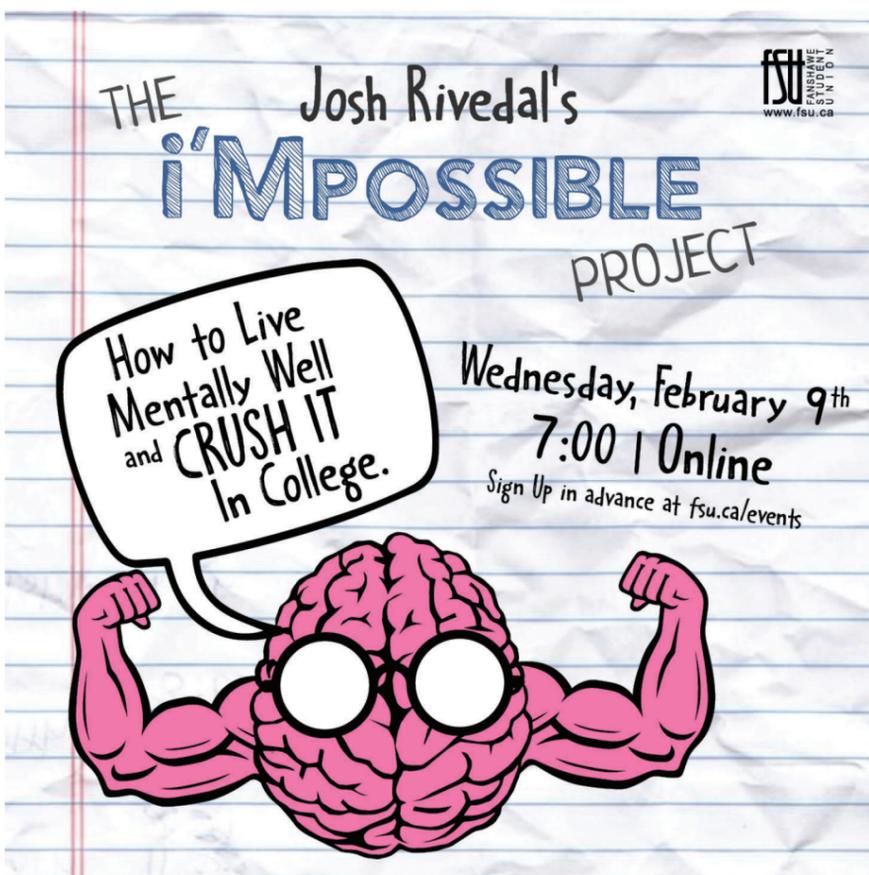
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