



Sign of the Times: Through the Lens of the Pandemic

Racial Inequality Canada and UK

Those of us who have grown up, or live in Canada, or the UK, have often been immune or blind to the many systemic racial inequities plaguing our countries. We tend to see racial inequalities as something “out there” that does not exist in our particular nations. In recent years however, Canadians have become familiar with the chronic racial inequities and scandals that exist in our indigenous communities. These inequalities are manifest in lack of fresh water, settlement of land rights, reconciliation of residential school abuses, criminal justice, proper housing, and adequate health care. Many Canadians continue to stereotype our indigenous population as lazy, alcoholic, unemployed, and uneducated.ⁱ In a similar way, prejudice and racial bias toward Black, Asian, and minority ethnic citizens in 21st Century Britain, abounds and negatively affects their daily lives.ⁱⁱ

A recent poll revealed that many Canadians have stereotypic misunderstandings of Muslims and Jews. It seems many believe that Muslims follow Sharia, not Canadian laws, and that Jews control Canada’s financial system.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, there is a rise in racial hate crimes in England and Wales in the past years with the influx of migrants and refugees, and with the outcomes of the Brexit referendum of 2016.^{iv}

The hidden and unattended lives that so many live with respect to lack of proper housing, health care, food and water security, sufficient income, and racial justice often eludes our experience, or imagination. All too common in our countries, is the fact that racism has a “colour,” that is associated with indigenous and immigrant communities, and issues forth in cultural/religious biases, violence, and countless social injustices.^v

One way to work for racial justice is first to become informed about what racial injustice looks like for its victims. Consider what you know against the Canadian information provided on the “Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change” websites cited below.^{vi} Check also, your knowledge and experience after reading the following UK [document](#) by Omar Khan.^{vii} Once such racial injustices touch your being, continue or begin to find ways to work with others to unveil and cure the systemic “colour” of poverty and racialized poverty in education, health, child welfare, employment, income, housing, policing, discrimination, and violence. Find practical ways you can join with others to change racial injustice in our national communities of colour and indigenous neighbours.

Sadly, our current pandemic has served to fuel racial discrimination and violence, particularly against members of Asian descent who are long-standing faithful citizens of our countries. For example, Asian citizens have suffered verbal abuse, property damage, physical attacks, cultural slurs, hate speech, and many other racial assaults because of questionable beliefs concerning the origin of and evolution of Covid-19.^{viii} It is important that we use reliable resources to keep properly informed by the best scientific studies that are working to determine the actual origins and evolution of the virus in its current pandemic state.^{ix} It is important that each of us take time to reflect our own racial biases and prejudices that can lay hidden or buried in our family heritage and life experiences. The following chart is one tool to help us name our racism and challenge us to work more fervently to eliminate the structural and systemic cases of racial injustice.



8 *Everyday Ways* TO FIGHT RACISM

1. Learn to recognize and understand your own privilege.
2. Examine your own biases and consider where they may have originated.
3. Validate the experiences and feelings of people of color.
4. Challenge the "colorblind" ideology.
5. Call out racist "jokes" or statements.
6. Find out how your company or school works to expand opportunities for people of color.
7. Be thoughtful with your finances.
8. Adopt an intersectional approach in all aspects of your life.

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[*https://nnev.org/latest_update/8-everyday-ways-to-fight-racism/](https://nnev.org/latest_update/8-everyday-ways-to-fight-racism/)

ⁱ https://www.nccih.ca/419/Aboriginal_Racism_in_Canada.nccah

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/02/revealed-the-stark-evidence-of-everyday-racial-bias-in-britain>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://globalnews.ca/news/5262461/canadian-racism-ipsos-poll/>

^{iv} <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/01/refugee-crisis-europe-mediterranean-racism-incarceration> ; <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-47538946>

^v <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/20/coronavirus-racial-inequality-uk-housing-employment-health-bame-covid-19>; and <https://blackbritishacademics.co.uk/2020/04/06/race-inequality-and-covid-19-the-uncomfortable-truths>

^{vi} <https://ocasi.org/new-fact-sheets-show-growing-racial-disparities-canada>; <https://colourofpoverty.ca/fact-sheets/>

^{vii} <https://www.friendsprovidentfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Runnymede-report.pdf>

^{viii} <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>

^{ix} <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200317175442.htm>; and

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/01/could-covid-19-be-manmade-what-we-know-about-origins-trump-chinese-lab-coronavirus>