

ETFO calls for action to dismantle systemic barriers facing Black educators and students

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Toronto, ON – As Black History Month begins, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) celebrates the many achievements and lasting contributions of Black Canadians. Black history is woven into the fabric of Canadian history—past, present, and future. The accomplishments, strength, and excellence of Black individuals and communities deserve recognition this month, as well as celebration, respect, and reflection every day of the year.

Black excellence has always been a cornerstone of Canada's story, yet Black educators and students face ongoing systemic barriers in the education system and society. These must be confronted and dismantled. Discrimination, underrepresentation of Black educators, and unequal access to opportunities persist, demanding urgent and collective action. This is particularly crucial as we continue to see a rise in counter movements moving to decrease diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in both private and public institutions.

Despite efforts to address anti-Black racism embedded in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, Black people still disproportionately face discrimination in areas such as education, healthcare, and housing. Black people with multiple intersectional identities, such as race, gender, or sexuality, face additional forms of oppression. As we work to build a more just society, it is imperative that we continually reflect on the historical ramifications of colonization and actively strive to eliminate anti-Black racism while celebrating and promoting Black excellence.

ETFO remains unwavering in its commitment to this work, both within the realm of education and the union. The Federation focuses on implementing systemic changes to confront anti-Black racism, and to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for its Black members. To support these efforts, ETFO has developed a range of resources accessible on etfo.ca. These resources include a [365 resource](#) for educators to incorporate the experiences of Black Canadians into their classrooms year-round, as well as [Black History Month resources](#), including [posters](#). This year's poster, created by artist Ekow Nimako, uses traditional African mask making traditions and a modern medium to honour Ada Kelly Whitney, the first Black person to teach in a publicly funded school in Ontario.

ETFO is also awarding two [Black Educator Bursaries](#) to Black individuals entering their first year of a faculty of education in Ontario. More information is available at etfo.ca/awards.

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